A WIND FLOWER

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A WIND FLOWER

Author's Note

"A Wind Flower" was written in the winter of 1897, before the outbreak of the present ritualistic controversy in the Church of England.

Ruth I. Green

Los Angeles

California

1899

"At a short distance stood Eunice Herendean."
Page 12.

A Wind Flower

A Novel

BY

CAROLINE ATWATER MASON

AUTHOR OF

"*The Quiet King*," "*A Minister of the World*," *etc.*

Brevis est usus

PHILADELPHIA

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Foreword

FROM the remote time when nymphs figured in society, down to the present day, the white anemone, or windflower, — that "tremulous woodland thing,"—has had some slight part to play in legend and poetry; and whether appearing as nymph or flower, it has always been invested with a contradictory charm no less than with a pathetic grace.

Various are the legends of the nymph, various the qualities attributed to the flower; but whether for love or death, it has ever some subtle relation to the wind, whether seeking it or shunning it; blossoming only under its influence, or perishing under its bitter breath.

Botanically, we know the *anemone nemorosa* for one of the earliest and most fragile of wild flowers, growing in the woods in exposed spots and also in sheltered nooks, "having a simple stem with involucre remote from the blossom, and bearing a single delicate white, or outwardly pinkish, vernal flower." The flower is starlike, and airily poised on the slender stem, "trembles to the faintest breeze." It

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is, perhaps, a surprise to find that the juice of this innocent looking little plant is acrid and poisonous. The Romans, indeed, believed it necessary to propitiate the first anemone with spells, to ward off its baleful influence ; and in some parts of Eastern Europe the common people still believe that the wind blowing over the blossoms becomes noxious.

In mythology, Anemone is a nymph, beloved by Zephyr. She is banished by Flora from her court and transformed into a cold spring flower which blooms even before the return of spring. Her beauty attracts the turbulent Boreas, who woos her stormily after his fashion. She resists him for a time, then yields and is inclined to listen. Her petals open, whereupon he blows upon her with a chilling blast, causing the tender flower to fade away, and she, "even in blooming, dies." Thus Ovid sings :

> Still here the fate of lovely forms we see,
> So sudden fades the sweet Anemone.

In poetry no one has caught and rendered the spirit of the windflower with a daintier grace than has Elaine Goodale in the following verses :

> Whence art thou, frailest flower of spring?
> Did winds of heaven give thee birth?
> Too free, too airy-light a thing
> For any child of earth.

O palest of pale blossoms borne
  On timid April's virgin breast,
Hast thou no flush of passion worn,
  No mortal bond confessed?
. . . . . .
Thou didst not spring from common ground,
  So tremulous on thy slender stem;
Thy sisters may not clasp thee round,
  Who art not one with them.

Thy subtle charm is strangely given;
  My fancy will not let thee be,
Then poise not thus 'twixt earth and heaven,
  O white anemone.

A Wind Flower

I

IT was the half-hour before dinner at Whippany Inn, in a remote New Hampshire intervale. Two young ladies were descending the broad, shallow steps of the old oak staircase into the low-ceiled hall. Although low, this hall was wide and lined with polished tables and cabinets, rich in quaint and curious china. Midway the length of it was the great tiled chimney, where a fire of birch logs blazed hospitably, flanked by big blue jars of goldenrod. From the hall opened various rooms of moderate size, furnished with a certain homely comfortableness. Nothing was new or obtrusively handsome ; the first impression made upon one coming into the house, was that everything had always been as it was then, and, on the whole, he was apt to wish it always would be. No person was in sight, and no sound of voices could be heard. Outside a chill mist was rising, blurring the great outline of the mountain ranges.

"Dear! but what a still place," commented the taller of the two young ladies, as she reached the floor and advanced with a rustle of crisp silk to the office, a small room at the left of the house door.

"What are you going to do?" asked the other languidly, as she followed.

"Why, we haven't registered yet, Grace. I want to see if there is any one we ever heard of in this singular seclusion."

Accordingly, the speaker entered the office which, like the hall, was empty, paused at the desk, and drew to a convenient point of sight the heavy, leather-bound register which lay open upon it.

Before investigating the signatures contained in the book, the young lady took the pen which lay in readiness and wrote in a pronounced, high-shouldered English hand: Mr. and Mrs. Horatio Barringer, Coalport, Pa.; the Misses Barringer; Miss Gladys Barringer and nurse.

During the process of writing the family names, Miss Barringer's sister, looking over her shoulder, had been closely scanning the open pages. They were handsome girls, with good color, clear, bright eyes, and a generally well-bred and well-groomed effect. Both were tall, with long, slender waists and the broad

shoulders and hips which combine to produce an hour-glass outline in American women of the conventional type.

They were dressed correctly in fashionable tailor gowns, rough and dark, and becoming to the tints of their fine skin and brown hair. Miss Barringer had a stately bearing and a peculiarly fine pose of the head; her sister was slighter; she wore an eyeglass, and carried herself a shade less confidently.

Just as Miss Barringer's pen had reached the last aristocratic stroke which recorded the arrival of the Barringer family, her sister, Grace, pointed lightly with her forefinger to a name near the foot of the opposite page: Rev. Francis Norman. The color in Miss Barringer's cheek was heightened a shade, as she remarked carelessly:

"Why, yes; I supposed he would be here by this time. I wonder if any other Coalport people have come?"

"Yes," said her sister, after an instant's pause, "there is Miss Archibald! Isn't that comic?" and they both laughed softly.

"One can almost foresee certain things," murmured Grace Barringer.

"Such as Tom Ripley, you mean," said her sister; "but he won't be here till to-morrow."

"Oh, Tom, of course," Grace rejoined.

"Turn the leaf, Flo. There's nobody else there."

"Sister Bertha and Sister Elizabeth are here," was the next announcement made by Miss Barringer, "and, yes Grace, there are some other Coalport people. Who can they be? Isn't it simply archaic?—Moses Herendean! And in that handwriting!" These exclamations were made by Miss Barringer discreetly under her breath.

"Does archaic mean coming out of the ark?" asked Grace soberly, bending lower over the register.

"Certainly," said Miss Barringer; "and please to observe that there is a Mary Herendean, Grace, and likewise a Eunice Ann," and here she stopped speaking, and lifting her chin contemplatively, passed her forefinger over the collective Herendean names.

"Why do you do that, my dear?" asked Grace.

"To see if they sprinkled sand on them after they were written. That queer, quaint, stiff writing always ought to have sand on it, don't you know? It did when I was in the ark. I remember it perfectly."

"Oh, Florence, how ridiculous!" said her sister with a laugh; "but truly, did you ever hear of Herendeans in Coalport?"

"Never. We should not be likely to know them, Grace. Fancy writing your name on a hotel register 'Eunice Ann'! I can always tell what people are like from their handwriting. I can see her, can't you?" and Miss Barringer slipped her hand through her sister's arm, and they went out on the veranda. "She is thirty-five, with freckles and a reddish nose. Mary must be older still, as her name came first."

"But why should they write their names in that absurd manner, with no Mrs. or Miss?"

"Grace," said Miss Barringer, after a moment's thought, with a low, little scream, "it is we who are stupid! Don't you see? They are Quakers, of course!"

At that moment, as they reached the corner of the house, they were met suddenly by a girl who turned in some confusion to avoid them, and glanced back at their stately, rustling elegance in shy and evident surprise.

"Dowdy, my dear," commented Miss Barringer, tightening her hold on the arm of Grace, "undeniably dowdy, but all the same an utter beauty if she did but know it."

The girl thus described wore a white dress, limp from the mist, and untrimmed, save for a little fine old needlework at the throat. She carried a writing tablet, and a soft snuff-brown

shawl trailed from her shoulder down the skirt of her dress. Her dark hair was damp and disordered by the wet wind, and below the confusion of it shone out dark, innocent eyes with long lashes and a soft pathetic glance. The mouth had a childish, pouting sweetness, with dimples about the corners; the face was without color, but firm and fine in hue, not pallid.

The veranda, like the hall, was deserted, save for two people in a sheltered corner. These, as they approached them, the Misses Barringer observed to be probably father and daughter. A tall, spare old man with a keenly chiseled profile, and gray locks below a black velvet skull cap, sat in a steamer chair closely enveloped in a gray rug. A crutch lay on the floor beside his chair. The long, blue-veined fingers held some sheets of manuscript which he lowered as the new-comers passed, and turning to a young woman who sat on a low seat close at hand, he asked, quite audibly: "Did thee send Eunice to put on warmer garments?"

"Yes, father," was the reply.

Miss Barringer and her sister passed on.

"Moses and Mary without doubt," said Miss Barringer, as they turned the next corner.

"Not only so, my dear," returned Grace, "but your innocent beauty in the limp gown was palpably Eunice Ann! And you profess to read character in handwriting!"

"It's pretty bad, I know," Miss Barringer admitted; "but Moses wrote all the names himself. I could see that at a glance. That girl never calls herself Eunice Ann, you can depend."

II

MOSES HERENDEAN, who was at the head of the steadily declining Friends' Meeting of the great commercial city of Coalport, was an old *habitué* of Whippany Inn. In earlier years it had been a favorite gathering place for Friends, but latterly this old circle had diminished, and this year the old man found that he and his daughters were the only "members of society" in the house.

It was a small and quiet house, the valley about it of exquisite charm, the mountain range in the distance, impressive. Moses Herendean liked the place. The rocks and waterfalls and solemn fir forest walks were all associated with his strong and sunny days. Hannah, his wife, had come here with him until her death, and here they had enjoyed many "favored seasons" in the company of those like-minded with themselves.

To be sure there had been changes. Whippany had been discovered long since by "world's people," but Moses Herendean found many of congenial spirit among these,

and gradually he came to look with indulgent kindliness even upon the decorous games and piano music which became the dissipations of the evenings. Through all the changes the old man had continued to hold a certain silent headship in the house ; the proprietor regarded him with profound reverence, and strangers coming to Whippany fell almost unconsciously into the habit of paying especial respect to the patriarchal dignity of the venerable Quaker. His kindly tolerance, his striking garb, and the quaintness of his speech made him a picturesque and pleasing figure in the exclusive little inn ; and there had been many who would have felt Whippany without Moses Herendean to be comparatively characterless.

It was early in August when the Barringer family arrived ; Moses Herendean and his daughters had been at Whippany for a month, but they had had the house almost to themselves, as the season had been cold and backward, and dull enough the younger daughter, Eunice, was beginning to find it. Her father was preparing to publish a memoir of Isaac Foster, an ancestor of the Herendean family and a Friend whom Eunice privately considered exceedingly tiresome in this generation, however useful he might have been in his own. Her sister Mary copied manuscript, and read

marked passages to her father from morning till night, except for a walk, or a game of tennis once a day, and an occasional excursion to South Whippany to look after poor folk there who were special wards of the Herendean family. Eunice found none of these occupations amusing. She was only twenty and had just discovered that she was pretty—an important epoch in a girl's life. Furthermore, she had only this summer finished a four years' course in a Philadelphia Friends' school of the straitest order, and she was eager for something new and interesting. With the arrival of the Barringers and a set of people who came at about the same time, a new order of things began at the Inn; the world "came up as a flood," Moses Herendean thought, and withdrew to more secluded places, elbowed out of his favorite haunts it seemed to Mary, his daughter, by these new people, to whom Eunice however was far from indifferent.

It was the second day of the Barringers' sojourn at the Inn and a morning of surpassing beauty, with shimmering sunshine in the green valley, and opal mists hanging over the shoulders of the mountains. On the veranda the position of prominence was held by a gay and animated company of ladies, while at a little distance sat a group of gentlemen be-

longing to their party, who were smoking and playing cards. Two Protestant nuns in their distinctive garb, bearing enormous crosses on their breasts, were walking up and down, stopping occasionally to speak to the ladies in the central group.

Moses Herendean had come to the open house door, and stood leaning on his crutch which he used to support an injured limb, and looking out upon the company on the veranda. It had been a part of the etiquette of the house that smoking should be indulged in apart from public view, and Moses Herendean had never seen card playing in the morning at Whippany before, nor upon the open veranda. The whole scene smote upon his sense like a vulgar insult to the immaculate morning. He turned silently back into the dark hall, and meeting his daughter Mary at the foot of the stairs, he said sadly:

"Thy mother would not recognize this place to-day, Mary. It looks like some haunt of sinful pleasure, or a resort of misguided Papists, instead of the place of peace and order which it used to be. Let us go out through the pines where we can be alone."

So saying, the old man passed out by another way, and Mary, with her arm full of books, turned as she followed him to catch, if

possible, a sight of Eunice whom she had not seen since breakfast. This she failed to do.

The center of the group of ladies on the veranda was Mrs. Barringer, a dignified woman of fine manner and distinguished bearing. Around her were gathered her daughters, a young and pretty Boston woman, Mrs. Mather, a fresh arrival, and a little maiden lady called Miss Archibald, with gray hair rolled back into a kind of crest from her forehead, giving her a singular resemblance to a paroquet; Miss Archibald wore at her waist a surprising assortment of small, clinking, silver-mounted articles, among them a smelling-bottle, a set of tablets, a tiny prayer book, and a lorgnette.

Mrs. Mather was occupied closely with a large piece of embroidery on gleaming white satin, which had been ardently admired by the little group. The black-robed sisters had stopped before her, and were leaning over examining the work reverently.

Against the rail, at a short distance, stood Eunice Herendean, watching with great wondering eyes the sweet, impassive faces of Sister Bertha and Sister Elizabeth under the harsh outline of their black bonnets. No one appeared to be aware of the young girl's presence, or to perceive the startled interest with which she looked on and listened.

A little child in dainty frills of fresh dimity plunged against her in its romping up and down the veranda, looked up, and seeming to know instinctively that this was not the right sort of person, broke sharply away from the caressing hand she had extended. Eunice watched the child as it ran away with a peculiar flicker of her eyelids. It was Gladys Barringer.

The sisters had passed on. With a sudden impulse Eunice pushed her hair back from her forehead where it was continually falling, and stepping nearer Mrs. Mather, bent over her embroidery and asked timidly, with a strange beating of her heart at her own daring:

"Excuse me, please. Your work is so beautiful. Is it a table cover?"

Miss Archibald raised her lorgnette and glanced across curiously at Eunice; Miss Barringer leaning back in her chair looked civilly amused. Mrs. Mather lifted her pretty head, and met the girl's eyes with reserve in her own, not unkindly, but distant.

"No, my dear," she said with clear-cut emphasis; "this is an altar-cloth which I am making for use in our church in Boston. I should be glad to unfold it again if you care particularly to see it," and Mrs. Mather held up the work in a half-reluctant hand. Eunice had chosen an inopportune moment.

"Oh, no indeed, please don't. I saw it before, you know," she murmured confusedly; and then, standing her ground with courage, she added: "I did not know about altar-cloths —that is, I supposed they were only used in Catholic churches."

It was plain from the inflection of Eunice's voice that it had thus far never occurred to her that people of ordinary intelligence could be "Catholics."

Mrs. Mather did not reply at once, but as Eunice did not retreat she remarked, bending again over her work:

"Ours is a catholic church, but probably not in the sense you mean. I suppose you are thinking of Romanist churches; altar-cloths are certainly not confined to them."

"Are there two kinds of Catholics?" faltered Eunice in increasing bewilderment.

"My dear," returned Mrs. Mather with a certain finality in her tone, "I think we shall have to turn you over to Father Norman for instruction—don't you, Mrs. Barringer?" and the expression of mock despair which she contrived to direct to that lady put poor Eunice to rout effectively. She withdrew to the support of the veranda rail and the shield of "Waverley," while the others pursued the conversation.

"You have never seen Father Norman, I think you said, Mrs. Mather?" asked Grace Barringer.

"No, he seems to shun the common eye."

"I believe he went over to Torridge yesterday, before you came, to make arrangements for holding service next Sunday. You know there is a lovely little church over there, and they are without a rector now." It was Miss Archibald who tendered this information with cheerful alacrity.

"You will admire Father Norman very much," remarked Mrs. Barringer.

"Ah, indeed you will," murmured Miss Archibald.

"Mrs. Mather," interposed Grace Barringer mischievously, "you mustn't quite believe everything that you will hear Miss Archibald say. You see she is inclined to think that Father Norman is a reincarnation of St. Francis. It is a little singular that his name should be Francis, I allow."

Miss Archibald's bright, beadlike eyes glanced in good-humored perplexity from Grace to Mrs. Mather, who was laughing merrily.

At this point Mr. Barringer, a stout, prosperous-looking man, joined the ladies, drawing a chair to Mrs. Mather's side, while a slender

youth, with a fair mustache, attached himself to the Barringer girls.

"I notice the conversation has come around to Father Norman," remarked Mr. Barringer; "it generally does. For the life of me I can't understand why these clergymen have such a fascination for you ladies. Now I observe that you never talk about me when you get together with your fancy work, and no one ever calls me a saint."

"Never, my dear," said his wife, shaking her head laughingly at him.

"One could hardly fancy a stout, bald-headed iron manufacturer in the light of a medieval saint, you know, papa," said Miss Barringer quietly.

"In short, you are not picturesque, father," added his younger daughter.

"Yes, I see," Mr. Barringer said; "and that is exactly what Norman is. You haven't seen him, Mrs. Mather? Heard of him, of course—the rector of St. Cuthbert's? He is a good fellow; I like him immensely, though to tell you the truth, I don't go in for all this ritual business myself. Life's too short, don't you see, and I was brought up a Methodist, and it doesn't come natural. But it just exactly suits Mrs. Barringer and the girls, and I guess you're a good deal their kind."

Mrs. Mather smiled responsively, while Mrs. Barringer looked extremely annoyed.

"But speaking of Norman. Did you ever hear about how he lives and all that? It is rather strange. He inherited from his father a fine old mansion right there in Minster Street in our place; has a library—well I don't believe there's another equal to it in Coalport; fine pictures too—everything of the kind. And there that fellow lives, all alone, isn't married, nor likely to be; some think he is pledged not to marry, but as to that I can't say. But in that fine house he takes for his own room a place hardly bigger than a closet, furnishes it with an iron bed and a crucifix, you know, that kind of thing—and has everything the poorest and plainest. Just like a monk, for all the world. Strange, isn't it?"

"Yes, but I can quite understand it, after all, Mr. Barringer," replied Mrs. Mather, plainly interested. They were interrupted just then by a sudden movement toward a game of tennis, made by the Barringer girls and the blonde young man, whom they called Tom Ripley. Mrs. Mather was strongly urged to make up the game; the court was declared fairly good, the morning perfect.

Eunice Herendean had not turned a leaf in "Waverley" since she took it up. She listened

now with strained attention. Perhaps they would ask her to make the fourth, for Mrs. Mather positively declined to play. There were few young people in the house—none who played tennis. If they did but know that she had played in that court every summer since she was a child! If they could see Mary play once! At least they might ask her. It almost seemed as if the court were their own, and as if these people had no right to appropriate it without referring to her in some way. The color burned in her cheeks and a tingling expectation ran through her. In a moment more there was a sudden silence behind her, and she saw the Barringer girls crossing the lawn toward the tennis court. A little later Tom Ripley followed with the rackets, and Mr. Mather, a Harvard instructor of studious habit, went slowly after, putting away the book he had been reading, with undisguised reluctance.

III

EUNICE HERENDEAN left the veranda and strolled out into the pine woods near the house in search of her father and sister.

She was stung in the very inner core of her young nature by the cool ignoring and patronizing indifference which she had met. It was a new sensation to her to be set aside entirely in the small number of guests at Whippany, as if she were too insignificant to be even observed. She resented the manner of the new set hotly ; but beneath all her resentment lay a wistful admiration which was in itself the secret of her pain. Something within her confessed that she would not have craved their notice and interest as she did, if they had lacked the peculiar exclusiveness, the confident authority with which they had set up their dominion in Whippany.

Eunice felt, but could not define, the convincing ascendency which fascinated while it angered her. "To be sure that you are the best of anybody, that must be what can make people like that," she said to herself as she

walked on, "and we have always been taught to think others better and wiser than we. I like their way far better. I wish I had been brought up like those girls. I hate feeling meek and inferior and bashful. It is dreadful to be a Friend, anyway! How those people must laugh at us if they ever think of us at all."

By this time Eunice had reached the hammock in the deep shade of the pines, where her father was taking a quiet nap. Mary Herendean held up a warning finger as Eunice approached.

"Where has thee been all this time, darling?" she asked fondly, as her sister slipped into a comfortable reclining position on the smooth pine needles at her side.

"I have been on the veranda hearing those Barringer people talk," was the reply.

A shade crossed Mary's face. She had fair hair and gray, luminous eyes, possessed of a direct and thoughtful gaze; her face and her whole bearing had the characteristic quiet and repose which is often seen in women of her sect. She was not pretty like Eunice, but there was a deeper harmony in her face. They were step-sisters, and Mary was the elder by five years.

"Did they seem to want to know thee and talk with thee?" she asked.

Eunice flushed deeply.

"No, not at all," she said briefly.

"I should not care to hover about a company of people like that, who felt no interest in me," Mary said; "it hurts one's self-respect. It is a better place for thee, child, here with us."

Eunice dug the toe of her boot into the pine needles impatiently.

"I should think thee might feel, Mary, that a girl of my age would sometimes like a little enjoyment—something besides hearing the 'Memoirs of Isaac Foster' and 'his valuable daughter Lydia,' and how he had a 'concern' to visit one meeting, and had 'business of great weight' in another, and 'solemn religious opportunities' everywhere. I know it all by heart already, and I am so tired, Mary, of never having any fun." And there was a little trembling of Eunice's pretty mouth, and her eyes darkened with tears.

Mary put her arm around her and kissed her with motherly gentleness.

"So sorry for my little girl," she said; "let's go and have some tennis while father takes his nap."

"We can't," said Eunice, her tears flowing freely under Mary's petting. "Those horrid people have got the court. They have taken

possession of everything. I wish we could go away from Whippany. I almost hate the place now. We don't belong anywhere, and it used to be all ours."

Mary's face was grave, and she made no reply.

"What are those people, anyway?" Eunice asked petulantly. "Are those nuns Catholics? I don't understand anything about it."

"They all belong to the Episcopal communion, I am sure. Sister Bertha and Sister Elizabeth came from a Coalport Episcopal sisterhood. I have seen women of their order often among the tenement house people down in the lower part of town."

"What do they do?"

"Oh, they help the women with their sewing and their children, and take care of the sick and all that."

"Why aren't they good then?"

"They are good and devoted and they do a great deal of good; but I should like it better if they did not wear that costume. There seems a certain assumption and self-consciousness in it."

"Why any more than in Friends' costume? I don't see that it is any worse to wear black gowns and black scoop bonnets as they do than to wear drab and brown ones as Huldah

Mott and Deborah Longstreth do! They are all ugly enough."

"I don't think it is really different, essentially," answered Mary musingly. "I almost wonder if our society may not have missed the great truth of inner simplicity by clinging so hard to outward plainness."

"Then isn't thee a Friend, really, in thy heart, Mary?" asked Eunice, sitting up with sudden energy, and clasping her knees.

Mary shook her head with a smile which gave a peculiar radiance to her face.

"I am not anything else, at least. Of course, all Christians are agreed on the essential truths, but I do not know if I could find anywhere, in all the different Confessions and communions, the spirit I most long for."

"What spirit, Mary?"

"It is clear to me," Mary answered slowly, "but I hardly know how to describe it. But above all it must mean fellowship, I think; sympathy, brotherhood, oneness with all mankind, high or low; and something yet beyond that, something which makes these artificial distinctions impossible. Oh, Eunice, I can't tell thee all I mean in this. It goes far and away beyond what one sees on the surface of it," and as she spoke Mary's face kindled with the sense of things too great for words.

Then after a little pause she added under her breath:

"It is after all, only trying to be as He was, in the world."

"And then what else?" asked Eunice, her dark eyes fixed on her sister's face.

It was an unusual occurrence for Eunice to show interest in subjects like this, and Mary smiled a little, as she replied:

"Freedom next. That is another necessity to me. That is one thing which makes me not quite a Friend, and not quite a good many other things which people run into so hard just now. I spoke of simplicity to begin with. Those are my cardinal points little sister. Does thee agree with them? Thee quite makes me think of Elizabeth Fry, this morning, writing in her journal when she was a girl, 'I do not know if I shall not soon be rather religious.'"

The sisters laughed together, and Eunice said:

"It might really come to pass. But, Mary, I fancy then that even if we weren't Friends, thee wouldn't go in for altar-cloths and a lot of things I heard those people talking about. They said this 'Father Norman' as they call him, was going to hold *mass* over in Torridge next First Day. I knew our maids at home

went to mass, but I never supposed people like the Barringers did."

"It sounds strangely enough for Protestants, doesn't it?"

"Oh, Mary," exclaimed Eunice with a sudden thought, "why can't we go over to Torridge on First Day to church, and see what their 'mass' is like? Father wouldn't mind, would he? just for once. It would be so new, and I am so curious about it."

"I am sorry Eunice, but we really can't possibly. It would not do to leave father alone so long; he is very feeble lately, and I have promised to go and be with the Lewises." Mary's face had grown suddenly grave, and she continued: "The doctor is to come over that morning from Concord for the operation. It is such a heavy anxiety for them, thee knows, dear; poor Mrs. Lewis is quite likely not to live through it."

Eunice's face clouded.

"I don't see why thee should have to go through such dreadful scenes. Those poor creatures in South Whippany always seem to fancy thee has nothing to do but just shoulder all their burdens. I think father and I ought to have a little consideration," and Eunice pouted.

Mary looked at her as if puzzled.

"Don't ever talk in that fashion to people who don't know thee, dear. They would think thee selfish and heartless."

"And perhaps I am," said Eunice carelessly, and rising as she spoke. "How long father sleeps. I am going back to the house now," and turning she passed slowly between the straight and stately tree trunks, stooping now and then as she went to gather a wild strawberry still left upon its tiny, swaying stem.

The wood was dim and dusky, even at this hour, and the slender figure in its straight white gown gliding noiselessly from tree to tree over the smooth ground, might well have seemed to fit a fancy of woodland nymph or spirit. Down, far below, for the wood was on the crest of a hill, ran the main high road. A man had left it just before, to strike by a straight line to the inn, for the sun was high and the heat growing oppressive.

The path which this man was taking and the irregular line of Eunice's progress, converged, but it was not until they were a few feet apart that the young girl was aware that she was not alone. Lifting her eyes she saw a figure in the dress of an Anglican priest; an austere face, clear cut and refined, though somewhat worn, and with eyes haunted by a singular brooding melancholy.

Surprised and confused, Eunice stopped, and with clasped hands dropped before her glanced up shyly, a faint color rising to her cheeks. The man's eyes met hers with a swift, serious glance, and removing his hat with a gesture of almost reverent courtesy he bowed, and passed on through the wood. It was Father Norman.

Eunice stood a little space where he had left her, her heart beating incredibly loud, and a strange, exultant thrill running through all her blood. Young as she was she was woman enough to perceive that he had done homage in his salutation not alone to her womanhood but to her beauty.

IV

IT was Saturday night. Some friends of the Barringers had come to the inn from a neighboring hotel, and there was dancing in the wide hall and in the rooms adjoining.

On the veranda the rector of St. Cuthbert's paced back and forth alone, apparently deep in thought. In his round of the veranda, which enclosed the house on three sides, he passed and repassed at intervals a lonely little figure sitting close to an open casement window, with head thrown back against the window frame. The bright light within struck full upon the profile, bringing out the soft curve of the uplifted chin and slender white throat. There was an unconscious, wistful pensiveness in the mouth and in the great dark eyes as they watched the gayety within which were not wholly lost upon Father Norman, scant notice as he seemed to take of the girlish figure.

Eunice Herendean's nature was full of tumultuous restlessness just now, and her inner life was undergoing a deep unheaval. But her Quaker habit and breeding held all this out-

wardly under command, and her attitudes and expressions still possessed the charm of a child-like repose.

A statue could hardly have been stiller, thought Father Norman, than that lovely shape, thrown in its white purity of face and dress against the outer darkness. Her hands lay motionless in her lap; nothing moved about her, save the soft, dark hair, which the wind now and then stirred above her forehead. A fancy strayed through Father Norman's mind that the dancers in the rooms beyond, flushed and heated and gayly dressed, were like a motley bed of common garden flowers, beside a dainty wild flower he had seen apart in shady woods sometimes, pure and white after a spring rain.

The fancy did not altogether please the rector, or possibly it pleased him too well; in any case he disappeared, turning the next corner, and returned that way no more.

Presently Miss Barringer came out from the hall with young Ripley. Eunice listened idly to their words as they passed her. It was so warm inside; those rooms were never made for dancing; a quaint old place, though—Miss Barringer really liked it, for once, in a way; they should go to the Profile next year.

On the next round they were speaking of

the expedition to Torridge to the church service next morning. Miss Barringer was determined to walk. Torridge was only five miles distant, but all the others would drive over, except Father Norman and Tom Ripley, who would go early; of course she could not go with them. When they had passed Eunice, Tom Ripley exclaimed on a sudden impulse:

"Why don't you ask that little Quaker girl to walk over with you? She would do it in a minute, I'll venture to say. You ought to see her and her sister play tennis. They are great at all such things, and a little matter of five miles wouldn't bother her a bit."

The result of this suggestion appeared in the fact that on the return Miss Barringer stopped by Eunice's window, and remarked casually:

"I have not seen your father in the dining room for a day or two, I think. He is not ill, is he, Miss Herendean?"

Eunice looked up in great surprise. It was the first time since their arrival that one of "the new people" had voluntarily addressed her. She replied with a certain dignity which became her, that her father had not been so well as usual for several days.

"How perfectly devoted your sister is to him," was Miss Barringer's next remark. "We all think she is just fine."

This observation gave Eunice a curious little pain, but she responded with suitable acquiescence.

There was further talk, somewhat aimless and unimportant, and then Miss Barringer quite incidentally mentioned that there was to be a little service in the village church at Torridge in the morning, and she had wondered if Miss Eunice Herendean would not perhaps like to walk over with her. The service, she was sure, would be very lovely, quite simple of course, being in a country church, but Father Norman always gave such a beautiful quality to every service, and the walk would be charming if one were a good walker.

For an instant Eunice had a swimming sensation before her eyes as excitement and surprise grew great within her.

"It would be a lovely walk," she said with hesitancy, the thought striking coldly through her exaltation, of her father's helplessness and of Mary's promise to be with Mrs. Lewis in her time of need.

"Oh, you must really go, Miss Eunice," said Tom Ripley with cordial encouragement; "I know you will like the service immensely; there's going to be a lovely Gloria."

The very fact that she understood but vaguely what he meant by the Gloria, com-

pleted the conquest with Eunice. She felt this to be her opportunity. Now at last her time was come to associate with "the Barringers" on equal terms, and to penetrate into the mystery of their religious practices, a subject which had become day by day more fascinating to her by the quality of exclusiveness and distinction investing it. Having won her consent, Miss Barringer and Tom Ripley passed on.

"Poor little thing," and Miss Barringer laughed; "I suppose 'Moses Herendean,' as he wishes to be called, and that calm sister Mary, will frown upon her, but really, it is only common kindness to take some notice of the child. Have you seen how pitiful and forlorn she looks all the while?"

Tom Ripley started to say that he had noticed to-night how very lovely she looked, but being versed in the wisdom of good society he forebore.

V

AN alcove at the end of the upper hall, with casement windows opening upon a balcony, was a favorite nook for letter-writing at Whippany Inn, and here Mary Herendean was sitting alone, bending over her portfolio, when Eunice ran upstairs breathless and excited from her interview with Miss Barringer.

"Oh, Mary," she exclaimed, seeking to hide an undercurrent of apprehension beneath a manner of confident gladness, "such a wonderful thing has happened!"

"What is it, love?" asked Mary smilingly.

"I am going with Miss Barringer to the service at Torridge to-morrow. She has asked me to walk over with her. I am sorry if it should be a little inconvenient, but I really could not refuse."

Mary Herendean's face changed. "No, Eunice," she said in a very low voice, "thee cannot mean that thee has promised to go to that service to-morrow."

"Yes," replied Eunice, with a certain inward quaking, "I have promised."

"But thee must have forgotten what we were speaking of a few days ago."

"I did not forget, but I consider myself old enough to judge what is right in such matters, and decide for myself. I am sorry if thee is displeased, Mary, but I am really going."

Mary rose and looked at Eunice, deeply stirred with pain and indignation. The young girl had learned from past experiences to beware the fury of one so patient under ordinary testing, and her eyelids drooped, though her mouth was firmly set.

"I am so angry, Eunice, that I do not feel as if I could talk about it with thee." Mary spoke quickly, not raising her voice, but with a vibration of feeling in it, startling in one usually so self-contained. "It is thoroughly wrong, what thee is doing—unworthy, disloyal to thyself, to all of us."

Neither of the sisters in the strained excitement of the moment had observed that Father Norman had entered the room from the balcony, where he had been sitting alone, unknown to Mary, and they both turned in surprise at the sound of his voice.

"Pardon me, Miss Herendean," he said, bowing with gentle courtesy; "I have unwillingly heard your conversation, and even though I may run the risk of drawing your

displeasure upon myself, formidable as that would be," and he smiled slightly, "I am going to be bold enough to say a word on your sister's behalf."

Mary Herendean, confused and startled, stood before Father Norman, dispossessed for the moment of her wonted serenity and poise, while Eunice, with tears on her long lashes, and grieved, piteous mouth, looked up to the new-comer like an innocent chidden child appealing for defense.

"It is only this. Her desire to attend Holy Communion to-morrow morning would seem an innocent and pardonable one. Surely it can contain no element of wrong so great as the indulgence of anger."

Father Norman spoke with a tone and gesture in which a touch of priestly authority could be distinctly felt, and Mary Herendean found herself strangely moved by his rebuke.

Father Norman had crossed to the entrance of the writing room, but stood a moment longer, adding with kindly but distinct emphasis :

"Even though our forms of worship may be widely different from yours, we have learned to look for the sweetness of tolerance and Christian charity from Friends," and his direct, searching eyes rested full upon Mary's.

A sudden color rushed to her cheeks. His misapprehension of the cause of her anger was palpable; her sense of justice rebelled against the imputation of sectarian prejudice, and yet she could not speak. To justify herself would be to accuse the child she loved. But Eunice—she could not fail to see what was so obvious; she could not fail to say out what they both knew perfectly to be the actual ground of this disagreement.

It was only an instant, perhaps there was not time; Mary tried to think so afterward. Then Father Norman had left the room, and Eunice had not spoken.

"Perhaps thee will learn now to control thy temper better," said Eunice softly, as she turned to go to her own room.

Mary did not speak; but she looked at her sister as she walked lightly down the long hall as one who comprehended her not.

Left alone, Mary had no time to taste the bitterness of mortification and wounded feeling, for the practical consideration of what was to be done in the premises engaged her of necessity. It was ten o'clock already, and she had promised to go to the Lewises in the early morning. After a little consideration she wrote a hurried note to a good friend of her father's, Joseph Willitts, a small farmer of

South Whippany, begging him to come and remain with her father during her necessary absence. This note she dispatched by a special messenger, a matter of no small difficulty at this hour.

VI

AN hour later, at the close of the evening, Father Norman encountered Miss Barringer at the foot of the staircase. He had just come in from a late walk, for the night was fine and the mountains majestic under the stars. Miss Barringer returned his greeting with a brilliant smile, and looked, in her delicately tinted evening dress, on nearer view, not at all like a common flower, Father Norman reflected, recalling an earlier fancy.

"You have enjoyed the evening, Miss Barringer?" he asked.

"Oh, yes. You know I dearly love to dance, Father Norman," she replied. "You never do those things, of course?" she added, with a certain hesitancy not usual to her.

"I do not happen to, myself," he answered; "but it is one of the signs of the church's greatness that it so expressly recognizes the whole round of our human need, for gay as well as for grave."

"Yes," responded Miss Barringer quickly, "how different it is from the doubtful and un-

easy attitude of the sects on all these matters. Formally, you know, they feel called upon to condemn and renounce 'the world,' as they call the gayety of life, but practically they follow it just as far as they dare."

Father Norman listened to the clear, assured conviction of these utterances with unmistakable interest, and for the moment the austere melancholy of his face gave way.

"Yes," he replied, "they are placed in a peculiarly equivocal position, most deplorable to witness. This very thing, it appears to me, is one sign of their decay. The original impulse which impelled them away from mother church has lost its power, exists only as a dead letter."

"Then, do you not think, Father Norman, that as they have really lost their *raison d'être* as separate bodies, they will gradually drift back into the unity of the truth?"

One would hardly have anticipated the ecclesiastical fervor with which these words were spoken in a girl of Miss Barringer's type.

"Oh, I look for it," Father Norman replied with subdued fire, clasping his hands behind, him and dropping his head in an attitude habitual with him when thinking; "but it will not be in our time, Miss Barringer, I fear, unless the whole church can be aroused to a sense

of its opportunity, the opportunity which is before us at this very hour, I sometimes believe, to restore all Christendom to catholicity."

"What a glorious thought!" Miss Barringer said, her fine eyes kindling, and her whole face lighted with responsive enthusiasm.

But even as she spoke, Father Norman lifted his head, and looking in his face Miss Barringer perceived with wonder, that its habitual melancholy had returned and all the light of enthusiasm had departed. Something like a sigh escaped his lips.

"This human nature of ours is a strange thing," he said with a faint smile. "It will bear watching," he added whimsically.

Although puzzled, Miss Barringer was quick to meet his altered mood.

"I see how you mean," she said gently, although she did not in fact gain even the faintest perception of what was going on in his mind, and then, skillfully turning to another subject, she said :

"Speaking of the various sects, do you know, Father Norman, that I am really rather interested in this Quaker family who are here at the inn. Did you know that they are Coalport people? I never heard of them at home, but they strike me as quite unusual. You know there is nothing in the world so aristo-

cratic, in its way, as one of those old Quaker families, and Moses Herendean impresses me as a perfect specimen of that type."

Father Norman had looked up quickly at the first mention of the Herendeans.

"Yes, a fine old man," he said, nodding gravely.

"Now their conception of life is different again from all the other sects," Miss Barringer remarked ; she was evidently not unwilling to prolong the interview. Father Norman was not often available for social purposes.

"Yes," he replied ; "there is a body in which, theoretically, every man and woman is called to the religious vocation. They too have declined from their initial conceptions, but with minor differences the entire sect might be fitly described as a sisterhood and a brotherhood, living apart from the world, distinguished by dress and speech and occupation, —in short, they have really, in a degree, the notion of dedicated lives."

"Why, Father Norman," exclaimed Miss Barringer, "I have always thought of Friends as being at the very antipodes from us, but as you describe them, they almost seem to come nearer to the ideals of the Church than any of the other denominations."

"In a partial sense that is true. For in-

stance, there can be such a thing as a ritual of silence," Father Norman said briefly, with his rare smile. "But, good-night, Miss Barringer; I fear I have detained you inconsiderately," and he was about turning to leave her, when he paused, and with a shade of embarrassment on his face, said:

"By the way, if Miss Herendean, the younger sister, should go with you to the celebration in the morning, let me suggest that you try to help her a little in understanding the meaning of the service. I fancy it may be altogether new to her, and possibly a little confusing at the first."

Miss Barringer readily acquiesced in this suggestion, and pursued her way up to her room with an expression of peculiar satisfaction on her face.

In his own room that night Father Norman sat long by the open window, musing.

"I did not know those people were from Coalport," his thoughts ran on; "I wonder that it did not occur to me at once. It all comes back to me now clearly. Years ago my mother was something like an intimate friend, if I remember correctly, of Moses Herendean's wife. Let me see. Mrs. Herendean died when I was a little fellow, not ten years old, I should think, but I remember it because her

death was tragic, and affected my mother so deeply. She was burned in trying to save her baby from a fire which was caused by the explosion of a lamp in her bedroom. I know the house where they lived perfectly, the old brick mansion down in Willow Street. I wonder if they live there still. I have heard nothing of any of them in years.

"Now, let me see, that child might be the older of these two girls; doubtless there was a second marriage, but of that I never heard that I remember. That would account for the striking difference between the two sisters. The elder has some fine points; evidently she has the capacity for a high devotion to duty along narrow lines, but what an embodiment of suppressed wrath she was to-night. A pity for such a woman to be so controlled by prejudice. Her anger would have been positively majestic if it had been for a righteous cause. Plainly she is a Quaker through and through, of the most primitive stamp. The sister is distinctly of another strain. A lovely creature!" and Father Norman smiled slightly as he recalled the slender figure of Eunice as she stood before him looking up as if for protection from her sister's wrath.

"Poor little thing!" his thoughts ran on, "what solemn, innocent eyes she has, like

those of a sweet child. The Quaker atmosphere produces a very different temperament from that of the restless, modern world-spirit. What could be more striking, in a way more suggestive than the juxtaposition of that girl and Florence Barringer? Each is interesting in her way. Miss Barringer spoke of the aristocratic quality of such a family as the Herendeans. I suppose that would rather impress her. I used to know something of their ancestry; I remember hearing my mother say that the Herendeans were English gentlefolk in Oliver's time. Yes, yes, and it was only the last Barringer who kept a small market in Lower Coalport. A good Methodist lay preacher he was, but ignorant and especially bitter against everything which he called 'Popistical.'

"Possibly the Barringers prefer to forget the old man, but they ought not to be sensitive in that regard; their family history is precisely according to the American genius, and by no means one to be ashamed of. But I wonder if that little girl will carry her point and go to the service to-morrow," and with this thought of the morrow Father Norman's face grew graver, and rising he took down from a shelf a volume of John Henry Newman's sermons, and was soon deeply immersed in devotional

thought and contemplation. Above his narrow desk hung a small, finely carved crucifix of old ivory, to which he raised his eyes at intervals, crossing himself devoutly.

But once, in the midst of his meditation, came the sudden darkening of his face as once before that night, his head sank upon the desk before him, and he wrung his hands until the veins knotted hard upon them. Something like a groan was upon his lips, and with it an audible cry:

"O my God, remove this temptation far from me."

VII

BETWEEN lovely meadows, dew-spangled and fragrant, Eunice Herendean had tripped, light of foot and heart, by the side of the stately Miss Barringer to Torridge old town.

Why should she not be light of heart? Mary was already on duty in the Lewis cottage. Joseph Willitts had responded promptly to the summons, and their father, accepting the services of a fresh attendant submissively, and well satisfied with a new hearer for certain chapters of the Memoir, had treated his dear little daughter with tender indulgence. Mary plainly, to the mind of Eunice, stood convicted of having made an uncalled-for scene, and the younger sister had decidedly the advantage of the situation. As to the moral quality of her action, no scruple regarding it came to disturb the equanimity of Eunice's young spirit. Was not all well if it ended well? Serene in this mildly Machiavellian philosophy, Eunice went on her way rejoicing.

Their talk on the way to Torridge was largely of Father Norman, his ascetic life, his wonder-

ful devotion to his work, the marked advance along the line of ritualism which he had inaugurated as rector of St. Cuthbert's, the complete confidence with which his people followed him, above all, the profoundly moving fact that it was almost certain that he would never marry. This Miss Barringer felt to be the final and most affecting touch in the picture she drew for the wondering Quaker girl, of Father Norman as a medieval saint fallen upon this present evil time.

"Our only fear at St. Cuthbert's," she remarked as they approached the church down the village street, "is that he will never be satisfied until he joins some brotherhood, where he may carry out fully his ideal of the Christian saint in a monastic life." Miss Barringer's tone imparted a touch of exalted sadness to this suggestion, and Eunice found herself sensibly affected, although at first thought it had struck her as rather droll to think of a Protestant Coalport gentleman becoming a monk.

The church, a memorial to some wealthy lover of the little mountain town, built of stone and approached through a grassy and shaded churchyard, was almost tiny in its proportions and built on the model of some of the ancient English country churches, low and long, with

the square Norman tower, and narrow, deep-set windows. The bell was ringing, but it was still early, and the two girls were among the first to enter the door.

Coming in from the clear radiance of the morning, Eunice could at first scarcely discern the interior of the church ; the light was dim, passing through the small stained windows, but in the distance against a deep red background gleamed out sharply a cross of burnished brass, with candles burning on either side. This only had Eunice taken cognizance of, when she saw with amazement and confusion that Miss Barringer had sunk upon her knees, and with eyes fixed upon the cross was in act of profound and adoring reverence. Eunice wondered if she would take it ill that she did not do the same, and was hesitating awkwardly as to what behooved her in the matter, when Miss Barringer, making the sign of the cross upon her person, rose from her knees and advanced down the aisle to seats not far from the chancel rail. Eunice sat very straight and very ill at ease while her companion again kneeling at her side seemed lost for a long space in devout prayer. The shy, undemonstrative girl, trained in the high restraint and severe self-repression of her father's faith, wondered greatly that one could "engage in prayer," as she phrased it,

so evidently private and personal, in a public place; nevertheless she felt keenly a sense of cold and heavy discomfort in her aloofness from what seemed proper to the place.

She was relieved by a little stir behind her. The delegation from Whippany was coming in, and Eunice looked on with childish curiosity as the two sisters in their black robes came reverently down the aisle followed by Mrs. Mather and Miss Archibald. The latter wore a rather giddy bonnet, and fluttered along behind the others in an important and enthusiastic manner. She was followed by the Barringers—Mr. Barringer, grave and impressive, Mrs. Barringer, stately and sumptuous in silk and lace with Grace behind her, quiet but *distingué*.

After this the church filled fast with summer people in fine raiment, dignified men and delicate women. Then Eunice lifting her head, was aware of strains of singing, voices clear, high, and flutelike, in the distance, coming ever nearer; and with a strange thrill of surprise, for she was wholly unfamiliar with the practices of the Episcopal Church, she saw, following a crucifix borne aloft, a procession of boys in white garments, like, she thought, to angels, pass, singing louder and more loud up the aisle. So close at last they came that she could have touched the white linen of their

vestments with her hand. After the boys came youths and men, and with startled surprise she recognized Mr. Mather, book in hand, with look detached and uplifted. Following him, in crimson cassock and white tunic, walked alone a young man with fair hair and color like a girl, upon whose face rested a peculiar solemnity, and in whom she recognized with wonder Tom Ripley, the gay, fashionable fellow whom she had associated hitherto with cards and dancing and tennis. Last of all, in his priestly robes, alone, with head slightly bowed, came Father Norman. His hands were held palm to palm against his breast, and his eyes were fixed straight before him; his face wore the mask of impenetrable reserve and impassiveness which is peculiar to those accustomed to be the chief actors in highly emotional scenes enacted before the public eye.

The procession passed on, the notes of the hymn died away, and Eunice heard a voice, marvelously sweet and controlling, intoning familiar words of Scripture. It was Father Norman's voice, but Eunice had not heard it before in that fashion. He had always seemed to her apart from other men, unapproachable, perhaps; but seeing him now in his priestly dress and function—august, remote from common things, her quick sensibility received

an overmastering impression of authority, power, and exaltation under which she trembled physically.

As the service went on, Miss Barringer found the places attentively in the prayer book for Eunice, and tried to guide her unaccustomed steps in the right path; but Eunice made little attempt to follow in thought. Keenly impressible to new influences, delicately sensuous in her temperament, and instinctively romantic, her emotional nature was powerfully swept by the onward flow of the stately and brilliant ceremonial. What it meant she was at no pains just then to learn.

She had no idea, however remote, of the significance of the faint, sweet odor and the dim light which pervaded the church; of young Ripley's shadowlike attendance upon Father Norman; of the sudden and apparently inconsequent changes of posture among the worshipers.

She saw Father Norman bend and kiss the altar; she saw him prostrate himself before something placed upon it with an apparent rapture of worship transcending anything she could have imagined; she saw him lift a shining chalice in the sight of all the people; but what this holy thing was and why he worshiped it she had no conception or conjecture, being

unversed in even the simplest forms of sacramental observance.

Once or twice in the midst of her dreamy absorption the Quaker blood in the girl made itself felt in a quick protest against the whole spectacle as an appeal to something lower than the spirit, and when, at the end, she involuntarily knelt with the rest, a sudden sense of compunction rose within her that she, Moses Herendean's daughter, had had part in a scene like this. In a vivid flash of memory she seemed to hear her father's voice at that moment, speaking in sonorous, rhythmic cadence, as she had often heard it in Friends' meeting: "Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone."

As they came out of the church, Eunice, dazed and abashed, following in Miss Barringer's wake, heard a lady say to her:

"Your rector is very high, isn't he? What a perfect assistant Mr. Ripley makes. The whole service was simply lovely, Miss Barringer."

VIII

MRS. LEWIS survived the operation, but lay for days between life and death. At such a crisis the patient could not be left to the accidental, neighborly order of nursing common to South Whippany, and Mary Herendean remained in the poor tenement house most of the time through the early part of the week.

Eunice now became her father's attendant of necessity, and she filled the position in a manner sufficiently sweet and engaging. Moses Herendean, to be sure, missed sundry small attentions and he did not find that the memoir of Isaac Foster was moving on at quite the rate of progress which it attained under Mary's care. But the people on the veranda, to which the old gentleman had now returned, observed that these two never failed to make a charming tableau. They were reminded of John Milton and his daughters, of Œdipus and Antigone, and of various other classic groups, as they watched the fine old man with his younger daughter.

"Everything that girl does is picturesque,"

commented Mrs. Mather to a Boston school teacher, Miss Arnold, who had been at Whippany for several summers. The hotel was quite deserted that morning, a large party having left for an all-day excursion down the valley.

"Yes, and she knows it too," rejoined Miss Arnold, who was given to sharp and incisive rejoinder. "Her sister devotes every hour of her life to that old man or to some other needy being, and none of you goes into raptures over her. This girl will do very well for dress parade, but when it comes to the real tug of war you will find that Mary Herendean will be called for."

"That is quite natural of course," replied Mrs. Mather; "she is older, and has had more responsibility. I am sure she is a very fine girl; but there is something so pettable, don't you know?—so cunning—about this younger one, with her great eyes and her demure little ways, that you can't help enjoying her."

"Give me Mary," quoth Miss Arnold briefly.

Eunice Herendean had become suddenly popular with what Miss Arnold called the "extreme right," since Sunday. Miss Arnold was a low-church woman, and had her opinion

of the high ritualists. It was the accident of knowing each other in Boston, rather than any inner congeniality, which brought her and Mrs. Mather together.

It was Wednesday morning when these comments were made. Eunice was reading aloud to her father with all gravity, but with languid interest, certain passages from "Barclay's Apology." Lifting her eyes, she saw Father Norman approaching. She had not spoken with him since Sunday.

He addressed Moses Herendean in kindly greeting, and the old man held his hand a moment in his cold, delicate fingers, looking up with kindly, musing scrutiny.

"Let me see," he said, "thy name is ——?"

"Francis Norman," was the quick response, and Eunice noted the bright, unconstrained smile which lighted up the clergyman's face. "I am almost a neighbor of yours, Mr. Herendean; that is, I am from Coalport, and I have known of your family for years."

"Not Mr. Herendean, if thee pleases," said the old man gently; "simply Moses Herendean is what I wish to be called."

"Pardon me, I should have remembered," replied the other.

"Eunice has been telling me something of

thee, Francis Norman," continued the Friend, bowing a quiet acknowledgment. "I understand that thee preaches in the stone meeting-house on Minster Street; was thy father Edward Norman, the lawyer?"

It was to be noticed that while his daughters used the "plain language" only in their own family, Moses Herendean used it to all alike.

After a reply in the affirmative, Francis Norman proposed that they should take a short walk together and discuss the points of family history which were of common interest. Moses Herendean rose with a word of apology for his halting gait, evidently gratified with the attentive courtesy of his new acquaintance.

Eunice, with a long breath of relief, dropped the dull, black-bound book, and watched the two as they moved slowly across the lawn.

A singular resemblance between them, real or fanciful, struck her eye, and brought a slight smile to her lips. Both were tall, slenderly built men of a certain elegance and grace of mold; both wore a noticeable garb, the coat of peculiar cut, the broad brimmed hat, and the faces bore a subtle likeness in the peculiar stamp which a life of contemplation and self-denial never fails to give; in both men alike was the quality of distinction, that of the outer man and that of the inner spirit.

Eunice was not the only one to observe this resemblance.

"What a sight!" exclaimed Miss Arnold. "The conjunction of an orthodox Friend and a High Church priest! And the intensely funny thing about it is that, in spite of the difference of age and all, they are so much alike! Don't you see, Mrs. Mather?"

"Perhaps so," replied that lady reluctantly, "although the resemblance seems to me entirely superficial."

"I am not sure but the two views require the same habit of mind. Those who leave Friends almost always run straight to ritualism. Both are ritualists, when you come to think of it," proceeded Miss Arnold, nothing daunted by Mrs. Mather's slightly defensive air, "only with one it is a negative, with the other a positive formalism."

"I suppose you would naturally prefer the negative variety," remarked Mrs. Mather dryly.

"Yes, of the two," was the frank response. "Still, it is always the positive side which prevails in the world."

IX

IN driving southward from Whippany, down the lovely valley through which the little river ripples musically, one comes with sudden surprise upon a group of shabby houses around a small paper mill, built upon the bank of the stream. This is South Whippany. The valley is still fair, the mountains are still in sight, but just here the purity and beauty of both seem tarnished by the squalid little settlement. There are untidy women in the windows, untidy children playing in the dust of the road, untidy washings hung in the yards. A small wooden building with a cross at its gable indicates the presence of the Roman Catholic church, and the town is not large enough to tempt a second religious body to seek a foothold.

It is a place to drive through quickly and to forget at once, the summer tourist thinks, a blot on the idyllic loveliness of the valley.

Eunice Herendean was approaching this uninviting scene, along the highroad from Whippany late in the afternoon, with a small bundle of linen for Mary's use.

There was a quaint and moss-grown stone bridge over the river just before one entered South Whippany, and as Eunice advanced toward it she noticed that Father Norman was seated on a low wall, separated from the road by a tangle of blossoming weeds, sketching this bridge in water colors.

He looked up as she came in sight, and closed his sketch book hastily.

"Ah, Miss Eunice," he said, rising and putting up his colors, "will you wait an instant? I want to ask you something particularly."

Surprised, but not ill pleased, Eunice waited until, with a few long strides, Francis Norman reached her side and quietly, as a matter of course, took her bundle, heedless of her protests, and together they walked on toward the village.

"I knew from your father that you would be coming this way," he began; "and while I was out on a little sketching ramble, I kept thinking of that poor woman he told me about, with whom your sister is staying, and I felt that I ought to offer to go to her. Do you think she would care to see me?"

Eunice looked up at him in unconcealed surprise. Why should poor Mrs. Lewis care to see Father Norman? She could think of

no reason. The woman was quite too ill to see any one.

Francis Norman hastened to explain further.

"I mean, you see, whether she would desire any service I could render as a clergyman. I would be glad to offer prayers, if it would be acceptable to her and her family."

"Oh, I see," said Eunice, smiling a little with unsophisticated candor; "of course, how very dull I was. That is very kind of you, Mr. Norman," here she hesitated, finding it impossible to address him as Miss Barringer did; "but really there would not be any need of it. You see, sister Mary prays with her all the time, and reads the Bible, and all that."

Francis Norman smiled slightly. Plainly Eunice had no conception of the priestly office. It was hard for him to enlighten her, and yet he felt a distinct responsibility in this matter. Perhaps her sister would understand better.

They walked on in silence, entering the squalid street.

"Mrs. Lewis lives a little out of the village —on beyond," Eunice explained.

Two dirty, bare-footed Irish boys were playing marbles in a yard.

"Look at the priest!" cried one of them with reckless derision, as Francis Norman and Eunice reached them.

"Yes, look at them, Jim," chimed in the other; "a priest takin' a gyurl out a walkin'! Did ye iver see the loike?"

The two had passed on now, but not too far for the parting shot.

"Hould yer whist, Larry, ye bloomin' idjit! Don't ye see yon ain't no priest at all? Himsilf's one o' them high-toned imitations that comes up here summers," and the rest was lost, to the unspeakable relief of Eunice, whose cheeks had become as red as the geraniums in the cottage window near by.

Francis Norman smiled in his own despite; these young barbarians had contrived in their coarse wit to cover two points of prime importance just now in ecclesiastical thought.

Nothing was said until, as they passed the shabby little church, he put the question:

"Mrs. Lewis is not a Romanist?"

"No, I think she is a Methodist, but there is no Methodist church here. She lives there," pointing to a low white house in a small garden, absolutely unshaded, and seeming to stare at the sun as with bare, lidless eyes.

"And your sister has been here every day since Sunday?" Francis Norman exclaimed, as he passed through the low gate after Eunice.

"I don't see how she can endure the heat," murmured Eunice.

Morning glories grew over the front windows of the cottage, trained to climb on cords, but the blossoms at this hour hung limp and withered. The scarlet bean flowers and motley portulaccas bordering the path seemed to scintillate in the heat. A small child in a clean pinafore sat on the step, eating a piece of bread.

"I don't think I will go in," said Eunice, who began to find some little embarrassment in the situation. "Geraldine, dear, you run in and ask my sister to come to the door a minute."

The child stared at her steadily for a moment and then obeyed. In a moment more Mary Herendean came to the door, the small Geraldine running after her. She wore a brown and white cotton dress, without the becoming touches of the nurse's linen adjuncts, but there was beauty in the exquisite neatness of her dress and person. Her eyes seemed to have grown large and dark, and Francis Norman was touched by the unconscious weariness in them. Her manner, however, was cheerful, and she concealed her keen surprise at seeing the rector of St. Cuthbert's in her sister's company.

As soon as he could do so he made haste to approach Mary.

"Possibly, Miss Herendean, you do not understand my presence here," he said in a low voice. "I have come in my Master's name. Your sister could hardly tell me whether this poor woman, in her critical state, would care for the consolations of the Church. For prayer and for the blessed sacrament, I mean," he added succinctly.

Mary Herendean looked for the second time fully into this man's eyes, and she saw truth and high purpose in them, albeit a world's width lay between his point of view and hers. A spiritual light touched her tired face to sudden beauty.

"I thank you," she said very gently and with the utmost simplicity, "our Lord himself is with her. Is not that enough?"

Francis Norman stepped down upon the narrow path between the giddy portulaccas, lifting his hat as he did so. He had done his duty, but the world's width lay between them still.

"It was kind of you to come," Mary Herendean said; "when she is better I think Mrs. Lewis would be glad to see you."

This was all. They came away after a brief, but affectionate good-bye between the sisters, Francis Norman reflecting with a little inner heat that Mary Herendean was not just the

sort of woman one would choose to rebuke for ill temper; even if, from the churchman's point of view, her religion were composed of all false doctrine, heresy, and schism, it seemed to have produced in her a type of womanhood little lower than the angels—singularly like a tired angel she looked, he fancied, as they left her standing under the limp morning glories.

They crossed the bridge together and here Francis Norman asked if Eunice would allow him the privilege of walking back to the Inn with her. She assented with shy pleasure, and a sense of being notably honored, although how unique and how envied such an honor might be she had thus far but the faintest notion.

It was nearly sunset now, and the shadows were long across the little valley, while the mountains before them loomed large and mysterious in deepest tints of violet. The air grew cool and sweet, and a sense of peace fell upon the scene and upon the hearts of these two, so strange and unknown to one another by reason of external distinctions, and yet beneath the surface simply man and woman, as from the beginning, with the primal powers and passions of their kind.

They walked on for a time in silence. There was a stirring within him which Francis

Norman knew to be out of harmony with the Counsels of Perfection which he had been contemplating of late. Eunice felt his look resting upon her and bent to pick a belated wild rose near the path, to hide the conscious color which she knew was rising to her cheek.

"Oh, I wish I was wise and clever," she said with a plaintive sigh, catching at the first thought which strayed through her vague confusion, "because then I could understand about so many things."

"What would you like to understand?" asked Norman.

Greatly to his surprise, she turned toward him, and raising her beautiful eyes fully to his face, asked with profound seriousness:

"Are you a priest?"

"Yes, truly, that is my privilege."

"Oh, dear," she said naïvely, "you really are! I should think you would so much rather be just a man." And she glanced up at him, half frightened at her impulsive utterance.

"But would you not think it a blessed thing, weak and unworthy though I am of myself, to be made by the grace of God the very best and highest thing that a man can be, the nearest to God?" and Francis Norman's voice had the peculiar quality as he said these words

which had awed Eunice so sensibly in the church service.

"Does it bring you nearer to God?" she asked solemnly.

"If it does not a woe is upon me," was the answer. And profound feeling darkened his face. After a pause, he asked:

"Does it seem nothing to you, my little Friend, to be in the direct line of descent from the holy apostles, who received their glorious commission from the very breath of our divine Lord?"

Eunice shook her head humbly.

"I am afraid that I am very ignorant. We have only been taught the things which Friends believe. We have no priests and no sacraments, nor altars, nor anything," she added dejectedly, and with an irresistible little *moue*, as if she had been abused and neglected. Then with sudden earnestness she exclaimed: "I wish you would tell me all about your church. I liked the service very well on Sunday, but I didn't know what much of it meant, and it all seemed very strange."

Scarcely could a more congenial task have been thrust upon a clergyman still young and not absolutely proof against the charm of womankind, than was given Francis Norman in this challenge from the little Quaker maiden,

walking at his side and looking up at him with innocent awe and yet with the artless fearlessness of a child. He addressed himself to the effort with all seriousness, finding a receptive and docile pupil.

Walking on, deeply absorbed in this highly important and interesting consideration, the two were suddenly aware of a sound of wheels close behind them, and turned to see the mountain wagon bringing back the excursion party which had left Whippany in the morning. As the company was composed almost exclusively of "the extreme right," the whole wing was in a flutter of excitement and curiosity as the wagon drove on with a passing greeting, leaving Father Norman and Eunice, not in the least disturbed or conscious, to continue their conversation.

"Our little dovelike Quakeress is making rapid advances, isn't she?" asked Mrs. Barringer.

"How dreadfully un-Franciscan!" murmured Grace mischievously, glancing at her sister, who had been out of spirits all day.

"Without doubt, Mrs. Barringer," called Miss Archibald, lifting her crest and speaking in her shrill voice from the back seat which she occupied with the sisters, "dear Father Norman is trying to instruct the poor, neglected little

thing in the right way. I am sure it would be a labor of love!"

"Oh! oh! oh! Miss Archibald!" cried Mr. Mather, bursting into a merry peal of laughter.

Miss Archibald looked her perplexity.

"What have I said now?" she exclaimed. "It would be, wouldn't it, Sister Elizabeth?" to which the little woman in black nodded kindly, but with an irrepressible smile, under the shadow of her bonnet.

"I won't stand any joking about Father Norman," said Tom Ripley stoutly; "he is a saint, if he did disappoint us to-day."

"Stand up for your idol, Tom," said Grace Barringer. Her sister had not spoken.

X

FRANCIS NORMAN, unlike many extreme ritualists, was born and bred in the communion of the Episcopal Church. He had, however, no leaning toward the ministry through his youth, and at the time of leaving Harvard was deeply interested in the study of art, and, having sufficient leisure and means to try experiments, went abroad for a time with the intention of learning to paint. His temperament was that of the artist, combined with the mystic; dreamy, introverted, highly susceptible to beauty; his intellect was subtle, his imagination quick and delicate, his spiritual nature capable of much exaltation.

Up to this time, however, Norman had accepted his inherited faith somewhat as he accepted the habits of speech and dress common to gentlemen, as a matter of course. He was inclined through his college days and for a time after them, to distinctly broad church views, where he had formulated views of any sort.

Finding himself strongly drawn by taste and

certain influences which surrounded him in Germany to the study of medieval art, he soon developed a sympathy with the English preraphaelite awakening of a preceding generation, and returned to England to throw himself with ardor into the study of the mystical symbolism and romanticism of Rossetti and his followers. Going to Oxford for a few months of study, he fell beneath the spell of its potent charm, and lived for a season apart from the bustle and clash of the modern world, sunk in poetic, meditative inactivity, despising the present, adoring the past.

In this mood he was met, and out of it he was called in a partial sense, by the spirit of a man whose name, though it belonged to an earlier time, could never lose its power in Oxford—that of John Henry Newman.

Francis Norman's instinct for religion, dormant through many years, sprang into life under the touch of that genius of whom it will be ever said, that "his mind was a miracle of intellectual delicacy, and his presence that of a spiritual apparition." It would have mattered little to the young man just then, whether the spirit of Newman had led his own all the way, even into the church of Rome; but this, through some inherited reserve, chanced not to follow. Norman simply

accepted the English cardinal as his ideal of the Christian saint and hero, and passed from his dreams of medieval art to a dream of medieval religion. Into this new cult of the Catholic revival, he threw himself with sincere enthusiasm; but, little as he realized it, his point of view was what it had been before, that of the artist, the poet, and the dreamer, taken captive by the manifestation of a more exalted and more mystic symbolism.

After a period in Oxford, he returned to his native land and received the successive rites of ordination in his inherited communion.

His earlier freedom and breadth of view and opinion he put voluntarily away, and bent his intellect by force to the yoke of a high sacramental and sacerdotal theory of the church. If the yoke were sometimes too heavy to be borne; if the foundation of faith settled now and again under the weight of the superstructure; if the pure flame of a spiritual love and life were well-nigh smothered under the material fuel heaped upon it, which it could not kindle into flame; there was always the refuge of more rigorous self-discipline, of the Church's authority, not absolute, as in the papacy, but sufficient, and of Newman's sentence, "Ten thousand difficulties do not make one doubt."

In process of time the stamp of the freedom and self-direction of his younger manhood had left his face, and its habitual expression had come to be the guarded watchfulness of the priest, deeply tinged with melancholy abstraction.

For Francis Norman had not fought all his way through yet, and he was realizing by inner and strenuous processes that

> Where we look for crowns to fall
> We find the tug's to come.

When he reached his room at the Inn that night he was aware that an hour of decision was upon him. His conception of his priestly office, while not absolutely involving the notion of celibacy, still clung to this as its ideal. "He that warreth entangleth himself not in the affairs of this life," he would have said; his ideal priest was the soldier-saint, stern to himself, gentle to others; ascetic, lifted above personal and domestic concerns, leading a dedicated life, apart from other men. The broad fleer of the street urchin, "a priest walking out with a girl," remained unforgotten in his mind, and showed him that beneath all the outward justification of his action there had lain a violation of his ideal.

It was not that for a moment his thought

had leaped to the extreme of desiring Eunice Herendean as his wife, but that, for the first time in these years since he had taken holy orders, a woman's eyes and voice had had power to disturb him. There lay an unreasonable but dangerous enchantment to him in this child, with her quiet ways and nunlike purity; she seemed to him so simple, so other-worldly, so altogether endearing in her naïve wonder and desire for what lay beyond her ken. Who could tell what might befall him if he lingered over-long, as he was tempted to do, where he could teach and train her aroused intelligence, and open to her the glories and mysteries of the Church?

Did he dare take the risk? Should he go and escape, or "stay and be beaten"? he debated with himself all night, recalling idly the old Winchester college motto. Doubtless the bravest and best thing would be to stand his ground and conquer; but a certain misgiving that, even if he were able to do this, he might run a chance of seeming to take advantage of the situation for proselyting purposes, turned the scale. Before morning his decision was formed, and it was carried out with a promptness characteristic of Francis Norman.

A few moments sufficed for his preparation for immediate departure; he left with Tom

Ripley his adieux to the little circle of friends, his explanation of pressing work, and, further, a small package of church tracts, which were to be handed to Eunice Herendean, with the suggestion that she should seek her father's sanction before reading them.

At five oclock in the morning he was ready to leave, as by walking down the valley to the nearest railway junction he could connect with an express train and reach Coalport that night.

It was a breathless, sultry morning, the valley lying muffled in white, wool-like mist. Coming out on the veranda, Norman passed a chair on which lay a big, black book, and a little, soft, brown shawl, the one which Eunice Herendean often wore and which she had left there, evidently, the night before. Well as he held himself in control, Francis Norman's hand involuntarily was laid for a moment upon the soft brown folds with a lingering gesture, endlessly expressive. It was the only good-bye he would allow himself, but it was a lover's touch. A woman was coming up the steps, out of the mist, who saw the gesture and grew a shade paler as she saw it, while a startled question leaped for the first time into her mind. It was Mary Herendean, wan and spent with watching, groping her lonely way home to rest.

Francis Norman greeted her with kindly sympathy and asked for her patient.

"She is better. She will do well now, thank you," Mary answered and went her way into the house. He did not detain her to say good-bye.

A few hours later Eunice sat alone on the veranda, reading a letter which had just been handed her; the envelope in her lap was postmarked New York, and was addressed in strongly marked masculine handwriting. Beside it, on her knee, lay a little package of tracts which Tom Ripley had given her half an hour before. Eunice read on with quickened color and eager eyes. Then, folding the letter, she paused a moment to note with a smile the contrast between the style of its address and that of her name written on the tracts in Father Norman's fine, firm hand.

"It is as well," she reflected as she slipped both letter and tracts into her work bag, "that father and Mary should not see either of these just now. It would only make bother. Poor Mary, it would be a sin to worry her about this letter when she is so tired, and if I don't answer it there will be no harm done. Those tracts I don't believe I shall ever read, anyway; they look as stupid as 'Barclay's Apology,' and have such long words. I can get Sister

Elizabeth to tell me all about the church. She knows what every last fringe and wrinkle mean. She is a dear old thing too, when you get over being afraid of her."

XI

COALPORT, the great, roaring, smoking, commercial city, black and grim in its center, and ghastly in the squalor of some of its outlying mining settlements, has yet its broad modern avenues with smooth lawns and fine houses, where the noise of the city dies away, and where the soot-laden smoke ceases to defile.

Such an avenue is intersected by a quiet street much older than itself at a distance of two miles from the heart of the city, called Willow Street, notable for neither beauty nor elegance in its dwellings nor social prestige among its indwellers, an old street relative to Coalport's rapid growth, a country road not so very long ago.

Here at the corner of a lane, which would be a green lane in summer, but is a white one now, for winter is well advanced and snow is on the ground, stands and has stood for fifty years, the dwelling of Moses Herendean, a square, brick house in a square, terraced garden. The garden is enclosed by a broad, brick wall, surmounted by an iron railing; the wall, low in

front, rises in successive stages of gradation as it extends up the lane, until as you lose sight of it, it has become higher than a man's head, and a narrow green door in the brick wall, tightly closed at this season, gives access to the withered rose garden.

The house in front has a tall, white-pillared portico, on either side of which it swells slightly and presents a shining array of windows. The roof is battlemented, and across the front stretches a white railing, interrupted over the portico by a dormer window. The red unpainted brick, of which the house is built, is weatherworn to a dull but not unpleasant hue, and the whole aspect of the place, particularly at this frozen season, is of well-ordered, comfortable stiffness, offering at no nook or corner the slightest challenge to attention or remark save for its all-pervading, shining cleanliness.

Within, the house comported not less with Quaker traditions, being severely simple, but unostentatiously aristocratic. There was handsome, solid woodwork, but there were no hangings; costly India mattings, and a few rugs but rare ones, massive mahogany furniture and gleaming brasses, carpets of cold, low tones, and bygone patterns. Steel engravings of George Fox and William Penn hung above a long hair-cloth sofa in the hall, but there were few other

pictures. The great sideboard in the dining room was almost large enough for a modern summer cottage, and bore a brave array of old silver; there was much exquisite china also, and both had been handed down through generations of wealthy Friends. In the long parlor were tables and chairs of teak-wood and ebony, curiously carved, delicate Chinese ivories and rare porcelains, for Mary Herendean's mother belonged to a New Bedford family of ship-owners, who brought their treasures from afar.

There was a cozy morning room beyond the parlor, opening by a casement window upon a broad back veranda, and here were Mary Herendean's busy desk and little womanish rocking-chairs and work tables. The library was a somewhat sombre room, with a faded carpet in large parallelograms of brown and green, and dark, ponderous bookcases. Here, on a Sunday morning, early in January, Moses Herendean was sitting in a great leather chair before a red cannel-coal fire, reading the "Friends' Review," and looking much as when we saw him last at the Whippany Inn.

Upstairs, from the broad hall with its fan-window above the front door, opened quiet, orderly chambers, innocent of superfluous decoration and ornament, but producing a

peculiar sensation of rest and soothing in their spacious proportions and spotless daintiness. In one such room was Mary Herendean moving about, preparing for meeting, for it was half-past ten by her little mantel clock, and she could see from her side window that Simeon, a Friend of low degree and the venerable manservant of the house, was leading out the old family horse. On the gravel before the stable stood a closed carriage of antique mold, bearing a singular semblance to a black beetle in its outline, and furnished with faded green silk curtains at the windows.

Mary Herendean crossed to her dressing table and shook down her long, fair hair, which fell over her white *négligé* like a mantle. She had a figure of Juno-like queenliness, and as she stood brushing and gathering up her hair the mass of it coiled around one bare uplifted arm and glinted in the winter sunshine like a sheath of gold. A door at that moment opening into the adjoining bedroom, Eunice Herendean was heard to exclaim:

"Oh, Mary, if thee would only go to parties and wear evening dress! It is a shame to hide such a neck and arms; they ought to win an English lord for thee at the very least!"

Mary's cheeks flushed, but she made no direct reply to her sister's outbreak, but seeing

her fully equipped for the street, said with ill-concealed anxiety:

"Thee is ready in good season, Eunice. Do I need to hurry?"

"Oh, no, not at all," returned the younger girl, fastening her glove with nervous haste; "I am not going to meeting this morning. Don't make a fuss about it, Mary; it is enough to have father looking at me as he does. Now be a dear, and tell me if I look nice in my new gown."

Eunice wore a street costume of soft gray cloth of finest texture, which bore the unmistakable stamp of an accomplished and fashionable dressmaker. It was a color which threw into striking relief the clear, pale tint of her skin. The severity of outline which, despite her inexperience of fine clothes, Eunice had insisted upon with a perception little short of genius, served to enhance her pliant grace and virginal slenderness, and to preserve in her the quaint charm of the Quaker maiden. None the less, the soft fur at the throat, the plumes resting on the dark waves of her hair, the long-coveted rustle of silken linings, invisible, save for a suspicion of faint pink around the dainty ankles as she turned and twisted before her sister, must have told unmistakably of luxury and careful design to the initiated. Both the

sisters knew perfectly that Eunice had spent on her present costume more money than either of them had ever used in dress in any year of her life hitherto.

"Thee looks very lovely, dear," Mary said with a yearning tenderness of appeal in her eyes which Eunice made haste to evade by turning back to her room for a handkerchief, and murmuring that she would have to hurry now. She ran lightly downstairs hoping to escape an encounter with her father; but Moses Herendean had laid aside his review and come out into the hall where he was in the act of taking down his broad-brimmed hat from its peg on the tall rack. Holding it out to Eunice, he asked, smiling:

"Tell me, child, is that my First-day hat or not? In this light it looks much like the other."

"Yes, that is right, father," Eunice said, patting his arm fondly, and moving on toward the door.

"The carriage is not here yet," her father said. "Thee need not hasten. What a nice gray gown my little girl has on. Did thee make it thyself, Eunice? It seems to fit very smoothly and makes thee look very nice."

"Not exactly, father," Eunice said, biting her lip to conceal a smile.

"Well, whoever made it, plain things are best, my child, and most becoming to the eye which looks from a single mind. Simplicity is the greatest charm of a young woman like thee, and I am glad to see that thee has a disposition to preserve it."

Eunice had her hand on the great brass knob of the front door, and was fluttering uneasily in her impatience to be gone. Her father's brow clouded suddenly as he watched her, and he asked in an altered tone :

"Thee is not going to have part in those foolish Popish practices in Minster Street again to-day, my child? not going to leave thy old father when he wants thee most, in the secret place of the sanctuary, under the covering of the Divine Presence?"

"I think I will go to St. Cuthbert's this morning, father, please," said Eunice gently.

The old man's lips trembled visibly, but he remained gravely silent, his head slightly bent. Eunice came back, stood up on her tiptoes and lifting her pretty mouth, kissed him coaxingly.

"Never mind, father dear," she whispered with soft persistence, as if she were soothing him for the delinquencies of some other person, "all the young Friends are going to Episcopal churches lately. Thee mustn't mind.

The Longstreth girls have joined St. Peter's, and the Motts are going to. Please don't worry," and without waiting for further argument, she left him with another kiss, stepped lightly to the door, and once outside, she closed it noiselessly but firmly behind her, and sped down the gravel walk to the street.

When in the preceding September Moses Herendean returned with his daughters to their home in Coalport, Eunice had looked about her upon familiar names and things with newly awakened eyes.

She had been keenly impressed with the distinction and elegance of the Barringers and their kind, and with the dominating personality of Father Norman, as she had seen them at Whippany, detached from their proper setting and standing simply upon their evident claims. When she reached home she discovered for the first time what these people really stood for, for their world had hitherto lain far from her own; Mrs. Barringer and her daughters, she found, were leaders of the most exclusive "set" of fashionable people in Coalport; St. Cuthbert's was a highly aristocratic church, and Father Norman was the object of a species of hero-worship which ruled the hour in fashionable circles, in part probably because he persistently avoided society.

The slight attention which Eunice had received from the Barringer party, and the distinct interest which Father Norman had manifested in her at Whippany, now took on a new significance and value in her own mind.

The exclusiveness which repelled Mary Herendean as the sign of a narrow, selfish, and anti-Christian conception of life, was to Eunice the very hall-mark of intrinsic value. It commended itself to her very inmost desires, and a species of ambition now took possession of her, into which were woven her long smothered resentment at the dull and obscure plan of life which had been laid down for her, her longing for admiration, for beauty, and for joy, and her envy of the life of fashionable society.

This Sunday morning interview with her father was not the first of its kind, although Eunice had gone on her way so quietly as to arouse as little opposition as possible; but her attendance on the services at St. Cuthbert's was fast becoming a regular thing.

Inexpressibly wearied and chilled by the colorless, negative coldness of her father's religious system, into whose lofty but strenuous conceptions she found it impossible to enter, Eunice was fully ready to embrace whatever was in most distinct contrast to its silence, its severity, and its unaided upward struggle.

Having overcome her first recoil from the elaborate external symbolism of the service as presented by the rector of St. Cuthbert's, she had found a peculiar luxury of enjoyment in its sumptuous color and music and ceremonial, and her quick perceptions had enabled her to adapt herself readily to its varied demands.

Furthermore, in a quiet way Eunice watched and studied the fashionable folk who went in and out before her at St. Cuthbert's, and learned with an almost preternatural intelligence to bring herself "up to the style and manners" of their kind. Thus far she had herself remained apparently unnoticed.

XII

AS Eunice Herendean walked on down the broad avenue, her small prayer-book held correctly in one delicately gloved hand, enjoying with the ardor of inexperience a faint, elusive perfume about her gown and its luxurious rustle, she was enabled by reason of these alleviating circumstances and of a natural aptitude, to throw off the painful impression of her father's face and voice. It had been simply dreadful to have his mouth so sad and tremulous when she kissed it, and it gave one a horrid thought of King Lear, and all that kind of thing; but still, though it was hard, one had to go through a great deal for the sake of one's religious convictions,—that she had always been taught,—and without any manner of doubt she was convinced, if of nothing more, that she was no longer a Friend.

She passed a fine house on the avenue. A fashionable brougham stood before the gate, the footman at the door of it; a lady and gentleman crossed the sidewalk in front of her to enter the carriage. They were St. Cuthbert's people, the Knights—she had often seen them.

They both eyed her keenly, with a look which seemed to her to say, "You are plainly somebody, but who? We ought to be able to recognize a girl who looks like that." In fact she heard Mrs. Knight say behind her as she passed :

"Who can that lovely creature be?" After that Eunice walked with renewed confidence, and the nervous anxiety with which she had worn her new array, despite her pleasure in it, fell away completely.

"Give me time!" she said to herself in a kind of demure exultation, remembering the unvarying blindness with which the Barringers had always been smitten when they had looked in her direction in going out or coming in at St. Cuthbert's.

A block or two more brought Eunice to a fashionable club-house, where a big bay window commanded the whole stretch of the avenue, up and down. Her heart beat faster as she neared this house, and although she passed it with averted face, she was not wholly surprised when she heard a step at her side and a man's voice saying good-morning.

"Why, Ralph," she murmured, a delicate flush rising in her cheek, "how do you happen to be in town to-day?"

The young man thus addressed was some-

what below medium height, with broad shoulders and an extraordinarily deep chest. He had a smoothly shaven face, indifferent features, a cold eye, and a passionate mouth with thin, flexible lips, but when he smiled as he did in answer to the girl's greeting, his face suddenly took on a peculiar and even captivating charm. He had a free, untrammeled gait, firm white hands upon which he was drawing a pair of loose gloves, and a certain air of poise and self-possession which might on occasion become too emphatic.

"How could I happen to be anywhere else when I could be here, little cousin?" he asked gayly, in a finely resonant voice, bending a little to see her face.

"I suppose you know how stunning you are, is it not so? Is this a grand *coup?*" and he glanced at her pretty gown with half-mocking admiration. "Where are you carrying so much of chastened splendor? Not to Quaker meeting, I'll be bound!"

"You shouldn't speak so, Ralph," said Eunice softly, but looking up roguishly from the corner of her eye.

"What is in the little lady's hand?" was Ralph Kidder's next remark, suddenly enclosing the tiny hand and book together in the large, warm clasp of his own. "Yes, let me

have it," he said imperatively; "I shall, anyway, you know," and he quietly possessed himself of Eunice's prayer book.

"Well, well," he said musingly, fluttering the leaves as they walked on side by side in a good comrade, familiar fashion, "if she hasn't set up a prayer book!—seal leather too, I swear, initials in gold—'crest and mane' all of the most advanced style. Getting on swimmingly, aren't you, child? What does Moses Herendean say, and our sweet sister?"

"You shall not talk so, Ralph, about my prayer book," pouted Eunice. "You're a horrid, irreverent person."

"You continue to enjoy St. Cuthbert's, I conclude," rejoined Ralph, smiling carelessly as he handed back the little book. "That's right. It is the correct thing. You have surprisingly sure instincts, Eunice, in certain directions, considering your heredity."

Eunice looked half puzzled, half pleased.

"Is their music as good as it used to be, I wonder," her cousin continued; "it used to be simply out of sight."

"Oh, it is lovely!"

"And Father Norman, I suppose the women all adore him just the same as ever, don't they? He's an odd chap, a cross between a saint and an actor, it always struck me; and I have an

idea he doesn't know himself which he is the more of. He's deep though, I can tell you."

"What do you mean, Ralph?" protested Eunice, offended by his tone.

"You don't suppose, you lovely little simpleton, that Norman actually believes in all those high solemnities and ceremonies he goes through with, requiem masses and the rest of it? Not he! He simply is clever enough to know the value of the spectacular in religion, and that shows his sense. There's one thing, though, you'll notice, if you go there often, that's rather curious. That kind of a high ritualistic church never gets hold of the steady-going middle class of people."

"Why doesn't it?"

Ralph Kidder gave a shrug of his shoulders and answered:

"Perhaps it's because they have too much hard sense, perhaps because they have too little imagination. At any rate, it's so. You'll find plenty of the high and mighty society people, the fashionable sort, whose luxurious tastes must be gratified in religion as in everything else; and there is another stripe that come with them as a matter of necessity, just as *u* follows *q* in spelling."

"Whom do you mean?"

"Their imitators," and Ralph smiled dryly,

looking down into Eunice's face. "But from that point, my young hearer," he continued laughing, "they have to drop to the poor folks who like to see the shows, and also are not averse to the loaves and the fishes which are apt to be somewhat freely distributed among that ilk. You'll have to go in for double distilled fashion and no mistake, Eunice, if you try to stand for anything at St. Cuthbert's."

"I don't care," Eunice said impatiently, vaguely resenting her cousin's advice; "and I never thought of trying to 'stand for anything,' as you say, at St. Cuthbert's. I supposed one went to church to worship."

"Incidentally."

"And what you say about Father Norman is simply wicked," Eunice went on with spirit, "I think you like to sneer at people who are better than you. He is not like what you say. He seeks nothing for himself, but lives like a poor man, and just gives himself up to fasting and prayer. I know he is sincere, Ralph, and you needn't try to make me believe he is not. Anyway, I want you to go away now; I don't like to walk on the street with you," she added impetuously. "If father saw that, it would be a great deal worse than my going to church, and you know it perfectly well."

"I don't deny it."

"Truly, Ralph, I think we ought to give each other up, and not write any more, or anything." Eunice had grown paler than usual as she said this, and she was walking on with downcast eyes.

"It can't be done, sweetheart," Ralph Kidder said in an undertone, through which vibrated a strong sense of power and passion. "Don't you know," he went on in the same tone which thrilled the girl by his side so that hot tears pricked her eyes, "that you and I are bound together absolutely—forever? Nothing can part us, Eunice, in heaven or earth. You may try as you will to escape me, and flutter in my hands, but they are strong hands and they will hold my little gray dove fast forever."

"Don't, Ralph, don't," cried the girl with something like a sob under her breath. "Your eyes are cruel and you frighten me."

"Certainly I frighten you," he said seriously but unmoved. "You are a weak nature; I am a strong one. I have a power over you which you cannot resist, and which will draw you back to me—listen, Eunice—however far you may seek to fly beyond my reach."

"You would not talk to me like that if you really loved me," the girl said, lifting reproachful eyes full of a strange conflict of dread and

love to his face. His own eyes were drawn narrowly, and under the level lids shone a steely, blue light, like a spark.

"Knowest thou what that means—*I love thee?*" he whispered with passionate, scornful emphasis. Then in a different tone, "I go back to New York in the morning, Eunice. You will take your walk this afternoon in the usual place?"

The question was more like a command than a request, but Eunice bent her head in assent, and with a brief good-morning the young man turned and left her at the crossing to Minster Street.

He was her cousin, twice removed, for many years an inmate of Moses Herendean's household until, over a year before, he had cut himself off from it by a base action, unpardonable in the eyes of the old man, because unrepented of. Perhaps Eunice scarcely understood the nature of his offense; in any case she felt that he had been too severely dealt with, and their boy and girl attachment had ripened by clandestine interviews into a secret understanding and a vague promise of marriage on her part. He was now studying medicine in New York, and merely visited Coalport at longer or shorter intervals.

Minster Street was separated at this end

only by a small square from the business part of the town, and the general blackness of Coalport proper was intensified on a morning like this by the covering of snow on roofs and walls. On the pavement the trampled snow served simply to make the blackness fluid, while in the square at the end of the street it lay sodden and cinder-flecked beneath the yellow fog and spectral trees. The sculptured *façade* of the Church of St. Cuthbert, although not in reality of great age, had been blackened by the sooty air to an aspect of hoary antiquity, and the statue of the venerable bishop between the doors rose portentous in coal black robes and mitre.

Eunice gathered her dainty skirts in one slender hand and stepped on across the muddy pavement, approaching the church with an air of circumspect gravity. Just as she reached the foot of the steps she was aware that the carriage drawn up at the curb was that of the Barringers, and that a face to face meeting with the family on the church steps could hardly be avoided. It was not an encounter which Eunice coveted, for she had perceived plainly before this that her summer acquaintances did not care to know her in Coalport; but her spirit rose to the occasion, and she went slowly and with self-possession

up the steps, almost by Florence Barringer's side, and so, without word or token of recognition, passed into the cold vestibule before her.

"That was the little Herendean girl we met at Whippany, Flo," said Grace Barringer, as the two lingered for a little space behind Eunice. "What possessed you not to speak to her?"

"The instinct of self-defense, I believe," replied Miss Barringer carelessly. "You know I never keep up acquaintance with those accidental summer people if I can help it. Fancy what a bore it would be after a while."

"Somebody has taught her how to dress herself," whispered Grace in her sister's ear. "Who do you suppose it can be? That gray effect is positively an inspiration."

"Herself," murmured Miss Barringer, pushing open the heavy inner door, while a fine seriousness seemed to settle visibly upon her handsome features; "she is an extremely clever little person in her way."

The interior of St. Cuthbert's possessed in full measure that impressiveness, half æsthetic, half religious, which Gothic architecture alone can produce. Furthermore, every art and device by which this effect can be augmented had been employed. Subdued richness of

color; the subtle mingling and heightening by contrast of simplicity and elaboration; the presence on every hand of symbolic suggestion; the white beauty of the sculptured reredos, and the soft lights of the altar glimmering through the dim choir; the strains of solemn, mystical music—all things which could smite sense and spirit at once and fuse them into a mysterious and bewildering identity, surrounded the worshipers as they entered.

Eunice, passing down a side aisle alone, was ushered into an empty pew, and although her manner was devout and her private devotions were performed with faultless propriety, her mind, for the moment, was absorbed in the cut direct which she had just received, and responded but mechanically to the influences of the place.

She was not angry, certainly not in any heated and unbecoming manner. That was not her way. It had not been pleasant to receive this cold ignoring, the rather that she had been favored to present herself this first time fully before the Barringers at the very utmost she could compass at present of external advantage. Nevertheless, she rather admired than resented Miss Barringer's unhesitating canceling of the slight and casual relation which had existed between them.

She would have liked to do exactly the same thing herself to some superfluous people she knew, and whom she had always held herself bound to treat with tiresome consideration. In fine, the sum of her reflections which ended with the outburst of the processional as the choir entered the nave, was this :

"Why should they care to know me as long as I am a nobody? If I can ever make it worth their while to know me for any reason, very well. That will be another story."

Just at that point somebody fluttered nervously into the seat beside her, out of breath and panting. The head which was presently bowed in prayer before Eunice's eyes struck her instantly as having a crest like that of some foreign bird. When the lady arose from her knees, Eunice found she was not mistaken. It was Miss Archibald.

XIII

HE two-o'clock dinner that day was a silent and subdued one in the Willow Street mansion. Moses Herendean looked like a man who had received a blow; his face had grown old and stern and sad. Eunice could find little in common to discuss with her father and sister, since any question as to the conduct and nature of their meeting seemed but to emphasize the fact that she had not participated in it; and Mary who struggled all through the dinner hour for some safe and comfortable topic, could not venture to make inquiries regarding the nature of the service in which her sister had engaged, and yet these seemed the only subjects present to their minds.

After dinner, Moses Herendean withdrew to the library for his usual nap, and the sisters went into the morning room.

"Dear me, Mary," Eunice broke out impatiently, "what is the matter with everybody to-day? Father looks as if there had been a death in the family at least, and nobody seems able to speak a word."

Mary Herendean was seated at her desk, upon which she leaned one elbow, and turning toward Eunice, rested her head on her hand and looked at her wistfully for a moment.

"I think father is very unhappy, Eunice," she said slowly, as if fearing to give her sister pain; "and perhaps we ought now to talk the matter over a little more plainly."

"What matter?"

Eunice had thrown herself upon a small sofa opposite the desk, and with both hands clasped under her cheek looked over at Mary with a challenge in her eyes.

"Father said I would better tell thee, dear, the thing which makes him so cast down. He will not say a word to interfere, though, and I do not quite see how he can, unless——" Here Mary broke off as if she found the subject difficult to approach.

"Well?" said Eunice calmly.

"Phœbe Anthony had a long talk with him after meeting to-day. She has a concern on her mind, Eunice, about thy seeming 'drawn away,' she puts it, from Society."

"She needn't trouble herself," said Eunice hastily.

"The fact is," Mary continued, "I am sorry about it as I can be, and I think they are mistaken in judgment, but she and another woman

Friend—I am not sure, but I think it is to be Deborah Longstreth—are to be appointed a committee to talk with thee about thy duty in adhering to Friends' principles, and all that."

Eunice remained perfectly still, not changing her attitude in any degree, and the only changes in her face were a slight flush and in the eyes the look of concentrated thought.

"Deborah Longstreth is just the one to labor with me," she said after a period of silence; "she has experience, and she has been so successful with her own girls."

Mary paid no attention to the sarcasm of this remark.

"Friends feel, naturally," she began again, "a peculiar degree of interest in thee, Eunice, father being at the head of the meeting, and his influence and position so conspicuous. It is very hard for him, dear, we must remember that, and he is so good, and so very fond of thee."

"I know it," said Eunice softly.

"If thee could be willing to remain among Friends while he is with us," proceeded Mary with a little tremor in her voice, "it would be such a joy to him. Can't thee make up thy mind to give up St. Cuthbert's for a while yet? and then I could just send a line to Phœbe Anthony and tell her that the committee need

not come, and we would all be happy again," and Mary's face grew bright with eager hope.

Eunice lay silent for a little space and then asked:

"When am I to be labored with, please inform me, by this committee?"

"Next Fourth-day, I think, after monthly meeting," said Mary in a low, reluctant tone.

"I wish they would mind their own business and stay at home," remarked Eunice slowly, in a passionless, thoughtful way assorting curiously with her words.

"So do I," said Mary heartily; "but thee is the only one now who can stop their coming, and oh, Eunice, it will hurt father so to have them!"

"I know it, Mary," said Eunice, springing to her feet, and speaking with sudden fire, "and it almost breaks my heart to hurt him, but if thee only knew how I hate, yes *hate! hate!! hate!!!* that Friends' meeting, how it chills and withers me, and makes me wicked and ungrateful and rebellious, thee wouldn't ask me to go back to it now!"

"But, Eunice, if thee must leave Friends, why not choose some body of Christians where there is simplicity in worship, where the emphasis is not all on the external, and not this exaggerated, pompous ritualism of St. Cuth-

bert's? I think that is the most painful part of it with father. He feels as if thee were going straight into Roman Catholicism."

"But I am not," replied Eunice; "and if he would only go and hear Father Norman preach, Mary, he would feel differently. Oh, he is simply glorious when he preaches, and he makes the service so beautiful, so full of meaning! Mary, I cannot give it up It would only be to go through with the agony at some other time. The committee may as well come and get it over with." And Eunice hurried from the room and ran upstairs, where alone, she studied the situation and formed her plan for herself.

The startling fact that her movements and opinions were taken cognizance of by the monthly meeting, and were to be made subjects of an official and, indirectly, of a disciplinary interview, suddenly crystallized her vague, indefinite ideas and desires into fixed intentions. She had, to be sure, received scant encouragement at St. Cuthbert's, and her way was not clear and plain before her, but she had one person to whom she believed she could turn with the certainty of sympathy and welcome. This was Miss Archibald. The little lady had given her a most cordial recognition after service that morning, had praised her

pretty looks with artless flattery, and had asked her to share her pew whenever she chose to come to St. Cuthbert's. Hers would do for a helping hand, but the person upon whom Eunice's thoughts were concentrated, with suddenly awakened purpose, was quite another from Miss Archibald, being in fact Father Norman himself.

When Mary came upstairs late in the afternoon, she found Eunice sitting in her window, her lap scattered over with a number of tracts and leaflets bearing such titles as "The Eucharistic Sacrifice," "Anglican Orders," "Sacramental Confession," and the like.

Eunice had unearthed the small packet of these from her trunk in the garret, where they had lain since she returned in September from Whippany.

"I must have my reasons ready for that horrid committee, Mary," she said, glancing up at her sister with a smile. But this was not the only or the ruling motive which led Eunice to the study of Father Norman's tracts.

XIV

IT was the fourth day of the week, and the day of the regular mid-week meeting, and also of the monthly meeting of Friends in their plain brick meeting-house on Barclay Street.

Mary Herendean had been spending a busy morning, first at home in ordering the monthly meeting dinner, always a notable feast, and afterward at a free kindergarten in lower Coalport, where she was a constant *aide*. She, reached the meeting-house a few minutes late, and with cheeks like pink roses from the haste with which she had walked. It was a mild day with an air like spring, "a January thaw," and the old black sexton with grizzled hair and beard stood out on the steps bareheaded, as if watching for a few more straggling sheep to find the fold.

He welcomed Mary with a silent grin, and with noiseless motions she opened the inner door, entered the house, and slipped quietly into her wonted place.

The large, high interior was divided midway by a low partition, on the right of which was the

women's side, on the left the men's. Three rows of elevated forms rising in successive tiers one above the other across the entire length of the room, faced the body of the house, and were reserved for "elders" and "approved ministers" of the society. The walls were devoid of decoration or device, tinted, like the woodwork, a pale gray, and the tall windows were of plain glass, with green blinds closed behind them. A green carpet of a small and obsolete pattern, covered the floor, and there were faded green cushions in the seats. None of the usual adjuncts of Protestant worship, even so much as a Bible or hymnal, were to be seen. Nothing was imposing, beautiful, or suggestive. There were, and this of intention, no features in the meeting-house, either without or within, which could occasion remark or attract the eyes of the worshipers, or even stimulate their devotion. Friends fear external suggestion on the one hand, as an interruption to the pure inward communion of the soul, and on the other, despise its aid, as a concession to the weakness of the flesh. It is to them putting the material in the place of the spiritual.

In the corner of the men's highest seat nearest the women's side of the house sat Moses Herendean alone. His head was slightly bowed, and the expression of his face

was of peaceful but exalted spiritual introspection.

Only removed from him by the space of a few feet, on the right, sat a somewhat rigid and watchful-eyed woman Friend, in the distinctive gray silk bonnet, the snowy lawn shawl in ample folds over the bosom, and the heavier shawl lying loosely upon her shoulders. This was Phœbe Anthony. She also was alone on the "high seat," but several women wearing the plain bonnet sat in the raised portion at intervals below her, while a similar sprinkling of men occupied the corresponding seats on the other side. In the body of the house there were gathered twenty or thirty men and a larger number of women. Few of these, however, dressed distinctively as Friends.

The hush of perfect stillness pervaded the great room, an inner stillness, not merely an outer, it seemed ; into this silence Mary Herendean felt her own spirit sink, as into its place of rest. An inarticulate, but no less sensible volume of prayer and praise and adoration seemed to her to rise from the assembly as the people sat with bowed heads, motionless forms, and rapt faces, silent, for the space of half an hour.

Then, not suddenly, but as naturally as if the silence itself had found voice, Mary heard her father pronounce the words :

"How sweet, how awful is the place,
With Christ within the doors,
While everlasting love displays
The choicest of her stores!"

Then in few words, not with conscious eloquence or regard to oratorical effect, Moses Herendean proceeded to interpret the profound depths of spiritual meaning in the "silent waiting before God" in which they had been engaged. He admonished Friends to see to it that such sacred privilege was not by any means suffered to degenerate into a barren and empty formalism, and to have the patience of love toward those who might exclaim in discouragement concerning this worship, "It is high, I cannot attain unto it."

He took his seat, and again the same hush fell upon the worshipers, intensified perhaps by the direction thus briefly given their thoughts. Outside, the roar of the city and the great waves of the world's life surged on hoarse and harsh, but they entered not into this still seclusion, even if distinct to the bodily ear in the unbroken silence. Then there was a little motion on the second of the raised seats, a woman who had sat until now with downcast eyes and a face like the face of an angel in its pure repose, quietly removed the stiff gray bonnet from her head, exposing the soft

parted hair under the spotless Quaker cap, handed her bonnet without turning her head to the Friend who sat by her side, and thus uncovered knelt in prayer.

Immediately the scattered company arose, each in his own place, and stood with heads devoutly bent, while the tremulous voice in its peculiar chanting cadence rose through the silence. The thought expressed was simple and sincere, though vague; the language strikingly biblical; and at its close the prayer suddenly soared upward in a burst of aspiration singularly moving. The company was again seated, and after a few moments more of silence Moses Herendean, turning toward Phœbe Anthony with grave greeting, shook hands formally with her and the meeting for worship was closed. There was a little stir and murmur, but most of the worshipers kept their seats. The grizzled sexton now appeared and, with some little rattle which smote sharply on ears accustomed to the silence, drew up from the dividing line a movable partition not unlike a broad Venetian blind, which effectually separated the men's meeting from the women's, and which was the signal for both bodies to go into the business session which distinguished the monthly or quarterly meeting.

It was one o'clock when the business session

closed, and Moses Herendean having gathered up a little company of country visitors for dinner, after the old-fashioned Quaker habit of hospitality, put them into his carriage which had waited long in the yard, and himself started to walk home with his daughter.

"The Ensigns," he explained to Mary, when he had closed the carriage door with his stately old-time courtesy, "wish to pay a visit over on the west side before dinner, as they leave town shortly after. I have given Simeon directions where to drive them."

Moses Herendean had recovered from his lameness, save for a slight weakness in the injured leg, and walked firmly, though slowly, with the aid of a heavy cane. As he and Mary passed down the busy street many eyes followed them—the fine, erect old man, with the striking nobility of his clean, clear face, and with his broad-brimmed hat and long, quaintly fashioned coat; the girl beside him in the fullness of her youth and womanly beauty, with her grave, sweet harmony of look. Mary Herendean's dress was quiet but tasteful, and the little dark velvet bonnet tied closely over her bright hair gave a fine natural contour to her head, strikingly unlike the pagoda effect of the fashionable headgear prevalent.

"We had a good meeting, Mary," said the Friend, as they walked on. "I have seldom experienced more sensibly the Divine presence, even in the old days when the strength of numbers was ours. There was a sweet covering over us, even from the first."

"I felt it, father."

As she spoke, Mary was suddenly aware, with a strangely perturbed sensation, that the man approaching them in pronounced clerical garb was Father Norman. She had not seen him since he left Whippany in the summer. In another moment they had met face to face, and Norman had removed his hat and stood aside with an expression of profound respect as the two passed him gravely returning his salutation. But the old man's hand trembled upon his stick, and Mary felt her own inner excitement augmented by a swift, startled consciousness which she had noted in Francis Norman's face when he first caught sight of them.

"There is the man who is robbing me of my child, the child of my old age," said Moses Herendean quietly, but with evident feeling, as they walked on.

"Father," said Mary timidly, "I almost fancy thee is mistaken in thinking that. Eunice told me yesterday that she had never spoken to

Francis Norman since we saw him in Whippany. She does not think he even knows that she attends his church."

"Is it so?" asked the gentle old man in a milder tone; "then some other influence is at work."

"The same, I think, that is at work everywhere," said Mary thoughtfully, "the time-spirit. Friends are not in accord with it; but whether they are strong enough to stand against it——It is a noisy spirit, father dear, and silence it will none of," and Mary smiled.

"I have had great searchings of heart since First Day," her father answered; "thee knows I was under a deep exercise of spirit that day, and could not find it in my heart to submit to the turning away from us of the child," and his voice trembled slightly. "But I have been led out into a larger place, Mary, in heart, and thy words are in accord with the views which have been given me."

Mary looked up quickly, and with swift, unspeakable sympathy into the beautiful old face of her father.

"I have been led to see," Moses Herendean continued, in a firmer tone, while his look was yet profoundly sad, "that there is a certain rhythmic ebb and flow in the great spiritual movements among men. There is a wave

of doubt, it may chance, then a wave of excessive and evil formalism, then a sudden high tide of religious sensitiveness and an abasement and abnegation of self before God perhaps sweeping through a nation even; then this too passes, and for a time, it may be, men will see only the sullen sea of materialism and spiritual deadness. Often too, the same cycle of changes comes in the individual life as in humanity at large, and who can let or hinder?"

Mary listened reverently.

"But let us not doubt, Mary," Moses Herendean continued, with a sudden light in his eyes, and a new elevation in his look, "or dream that our God has forgotten to be gracious! What has been, shall return as before. Our system may 'have its day and cease to be,' but what then? There is a spirit in man and the Almighty giveth it understanding. There may be other manifestations, and the self-same spirit. What are we, to cling to our place and name? If we pass, and our message is again needed, God, who aforetime spake by the mouth of his prophets, can raise up new prophets who shall cry aloud and spare not, until the foolish and disobedient turn again from folly and purge themselves from dead works to serve the living God. He will not leave himself without a witness. The

Inner Light shall lighten every man that cometh into the world."

He paused, and they walked on in silence a little space, when, turning to his daughter with a smile exquisitely benign, the old man added:

"Therefore will we not fear."

Then Mary knew that there would be no further heart-burnings as regarded the lapse of Eunice from their inherited faith, and she knew the way by which her father had reached the large-minded patience and sweetness with which he was thereafter to treat his child.

XV

MEANWHILE, on that Wednesday morning, Eunice Herendean had betaken herself with a fixed purpose to the service at St. Cuthbert's, which was held at the same hour as the Friends' meeting in Barclay Street.

She was not without some hesitation in following out the course she had prescribed for herself, which, in her quiet and uneventful life seemed little less than revolutionary ; and the old words, "Be bold, Be bold, and everywhere Be bold," seemed to beat in her ears like blows on a drum, all the way as she walked down to Minster Street. Arrived in the church she stood irresolute in its still, echoing spaces, for not more than a score of persons were gathered at this hour, and scanned the number of these narrowly.

She soon discovered Miss Archibald in her distant pew, and walked with some diffidence down the long aisle alone, and presented herself with a timid, questioning smile at the little lady's left elbow. Miss Archibald quickly and cordially made space for her at her side, and

patted her cold hand with many reassuring smiles.

"You're almost getting to be one of us, aren't you?" she whispered very loud, and greatly to Eunice's discomfiture; "that's right. Just come right along."

At the conclusion of the service which some way affected Eunice strangely, given in the nearly empty church, without music and with the strange hollow echoes following Father Norman's voice, she walked out with Miss Archibald in silence, although with now and then the beginning of a question on her lips which died away unspoken by reason of her timidity. Finally, when they had passed out into the vestibule she took heart of grace and seeing her last chance to carry out her intent for that day about to close, for Miss Archibald had begun to cock her head for an affable good-morning, she said hastily, though with hesitation:

"Do you think, Miss Archibald—could I—do you suppose—see Mr. Norman just for a moment?"

Miss Archibald's bright eyes twinkled in keen surprise, but she smiled almost affectionately as she replied:

"Why, bless me, yes, child! Of course you can see Father Norman, if you can catch

him when he isn't busy. It is hard to do that sometimes."

Eunice waited with a beating heart as Miss Archibald consulted her watch and said:

"It is not twelve yet, and if you will go with me right off now into the school next door, you know, I shouldn't wonder if we would find him there. He gives a lecture to the scholars I know at twelve, and he may be able to spare you a few minutes," and without waiting for further discussion, Miss Archibald led the way out to the street, and past the church to the parish house, a long row of brick buildings adjoining.

They entered a bare and somewhat cheerless corridor, at the left of which wide folding doors stood open into a reception room of a stiff and official character. Motioning Eunice to enter this room, which she did with a physical trembling, as if it had been an operating room in a hospital, Miss Archibald fluttered nervously upon the threshold turning her head with swift motions to look now up and then down the corridor in search of some one who looked willing to be interrupted by a commission.

"I guess maybe I'd better go out and ring that bell," she began to say, when a middle-aged woman, in the black garb of the sister-

hood attached to St. Cuthbert's approached her, and asked with a somewhat severe civility if she wanted anything.

"Oh, if you please, Sister Agatha—" said Miss Archibald, "this is Sister Agatha, isn't it? I know you, if you don't know me—Miss Archibald," whereupon Sister Agatha bowed, but did not relax the formidable seriousness of her countenance, "Would you, *could* you, don't you know, if it isn't putting you out too much—see if Father Norman could come down and let me speak with him a moment?"

"I do not know whether he has come in yet," replied the other briefly; "I will see," and she turned and went slowly up the stairs; Miss Archibald thereupon rejoined Eunice, who now most devoutly repented her of her undertaking, the motives for which seemed suddenly to have been frozen to death by the atmosphere around her. So the girl sat, frightened and sick at heart, with drooping eyes and nervous hands, when suddenly the tall figure of Francis Norman stood in the doorway, and, not seeing Eunice, advanced to meet Miss Archibald, who had risen with all her little furbelows in a flutter, a book held in his hand—his place marked by one finger—his look grave and preoccupied, his step hasty.

The manner in which Father Norman re-

ceived Miss Archibald, while very courteous, seemed to Eunice to say distinctly that he hoped she would make her errand as brief as possible, when suddenly, caught unawares, his eyes lighting upon her own chilled and unhappy little person, an extraordinary change came into his face, and to the girl's amazement he approached and spoke to her with a face fairly transformed by sudden and irrepressible pleasure ; his eyes for a moment seemed to flood her own with their light.

It passed and his face regained its impassive listening expression, but Eunice had received a new thought into her heart, which was destined to have its working. She had long since fallen into the ranks of Father Norman's adorers.

"It is I who wanted to speak with you," she said rising with a sudden influx of warmth and confidence, and holding out her hand, which Father Norman clasped cordially ; "Miss Archibald was so very kind as to come here with me, for I should not have known at all how to find you, or anything," she added in her childish, unstudied fashion, "if she had not helped me."

Father Norman bowed his appreciation of Miss Archibald's amiable intervention, and the little lady, hardly knowing whether her cue was to withdraw or remain, began a series of

indefinite, birdlike movements which resulted in a gradual approach to the open door, and finding that this tendency to depart met with no opposition from either Eunice or Father Norman, she presently bowed herself out, and went on her way, leaving the proprieties to be cared for by a typewriter who was at work in the room hard by.

Father Norman meanwhile had looked into Eunice's still colorless face with a question unspoken on his lips, when she asked, "Am I taking you away from what you have to do? Please send me away if I am troublesome."

"You are not troublesome," he said gently, and laying a small, curiously chased watch on the palm of his hand he added, "I have just ten minutes before my lecture. Now tell me if there is anything I can do for you, Eunice Herendean," and he smiled as he spoke her name thus, and said: "Your family at Whippany infected me with your own beautiful habit of speech, and it seems impossible to use the term in speaking of you that I should of others."

The emphasis on the last word seemed to place Eunice and her kin on an indefinitely higher plane than the rest of society, and renewed her courage sensibly. Perhaps, then, she was somebody, after all.

"Is there any way," she began, lifting her dark, serious eyes to his, "that any one like me, who is not really a Friend any more at heart, and they know it, Friends do, and are not nice about it," she went on confusedly, but still making her meaning clear, "any way that a person like that can stop being a Friend and become one of your church?" and Eunice's voice sank lower, as if she almost feared to hear herself pronounce the last words.

"There is a way," Father Norman answered steadily. There was a strange conflict of feeling going on within him, by no means betrayed by his quiet words. At first, as soon as he had perceived the nature of Eunice's errand, a deep reluctance to conform to it had risen within him.

Ever since he had left her at Whippany, moved by motives which she was farthest from suspecting, Francis Norman had held in his heart as a possession unspeakably precious, the image of the young Quaker girl in her Puritan simplicity and quaint unworldliness. He had, or thought he had, won such mastery over himself as to hold this thought of Eunice, not as of a woman of flesh and blood and alluring earthly sweetness, but as an ideal, a poetic image, passion-pure, holy, and high. All the poet in him was stirred into quickened life, and

she became to his idealizing fancy as Beatrice to Dante—a being remote, detached from the common desires of men. He found the Florentine's words as if written of this nineteenth century maiden and wondered :

> How chanceth it
> That flesh, which is of dust, should be thus pure ?

Again, she was "the lily maid," the shy, white wild flower of his earlier fancy, but always, in his thought, she was distinct from all other women he knew, aloof and apart, essentially by reason of the peculiar separation of her father's faith and her own. Doctrinally, Maurice in hand, he could have demolished Quakerism to his own satisfaction at any time in half an hour as totally untenable ; but to the artist and poet in him the embodiment of Quakerism in Eunice Herendean appealed convincingly.

Hence it was that, seeing the girl herself thus unexpectedly before him, to his overmastering joy, on the instant all the official proselyting zeal of the priest was neutralized, and the first instinctive response to the desire of Eunice on Father Norman's part was a pang that by any means she could become other than he had known her. The thought which succeeded this in his mind was not less natural but possi-

bly it was even less in harmony with his priestly character, for it set all his pulses into swifter motion, and awoke a vague sweet dread in his heart. It was the thought that if Eunice should carry out her new desire into actual fulfillment, he should inevitably, in a way beyond his own power to prevent, be brought frequently into a personal and intimate relation with her, that of the pastor to one of the children of his charge.

"There is a way," he repeated, adding slowly, "if you are quite sure, my child, that such a course is along the line of your true and earnest conviction."

"It is," Eunice answered with characteristic brevity, being bred to the maxim, "Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay."

"There were some tracts," Father Norman said, looking now with grave, untroubled directness into Eunice's eyes; "I asked some one to give them to you when I left Whippany. Have you been reading them?"

"Yes. I think they are very strong," Ennice replied naïvely.

"Very good. You have not a prayer book, perhaps?" and he produced a small copy.

"Yes; I have one, and I know it very well, now, thank you. I have been coming to St. Cuthbert's to church all the fall."

Father Norman was greatly surprised. "If you carry out such a plan as you have suggested, Eunice Herendean," he said with a touch of authority almost cold, "I must insist that it shall be with the full consent of your father, for whom I have the deepest reverence."

"I think my father will consent," said Eunice with a little faltering in her voice.

Father Norman slipped his watch back into its pocket and rose.

"There is not time now for us to give the attention to this matter that it deserves. I will send you by post certain papers suited to one considering a step like this. If, after due thought and prayer, you are fully convinced that ours is the church of your choice, I shall of course be glad to receive you into my confirmation class."

"Thank you," said Eunice humbly, as she walked toward the door.

Father Norman paused, and stood for a moment, with bent head, considering.

"In that case," he began again thoughtfully, "I should wish to see you once before you came in with the others, to examine more particularly the grounds of your personal faith and the reasons for your taking this step."

Eunice felt a renewed trembling, as she

listened to these words, spoken with a searching impressiveness which seemed to wither the sudden growth of her motives and desires to rubbish before her eyes. Father Norman watched her steadily.

"You may, perhaps," he added, "need a little more instruction in certain directions than those do who have grown up in the church. We will arrange it, then, if it is convenient to you," he proceeded, "that I will receive you here in this room, which is at my disposal for these purposes, a week from to-day, at four o'clock. And I must ask you, Eunice Herendean, to bring your sister with you, or some other member of your family."

Eunice looked up quickly in surprise, doubting if she dared ask this of Mary. Father Norman smiled slightly.

"I think Mary Herendean will come," he said; "I am sure she will if you convince her that this is a matter of your conscience and conviction," and with that he bade Eunice good-morning, and hastened back to his recitation room for the half-hour lecture he was to give at noon.

At two o'clock, in her own home, Eunice met her sister at the head of the stairs, as they were going down to dinner. The hall below appeared quite full of the monthly meeting

guests, among whom Moses Herendean was moving about with gracious hospitality.

Eunice had changed her walking clothes for a house dress of shining white stuff, fashioned with a plainness not exceeded by that of the sedate Friends who had just passed down the staircase, but which had about it an indefinable elegance and grace of outline.

"Ah, love!" cried Mary, stopping to look at Eunice with fond eyes, "I have not seen her once since breakfast! She has put on the gown that makes her look like my little white Una," and Mary lifted her sister's face between both her hands and kissed her forehead lightly. "I used to call thee that before thee went away to school. Does thee remember?"

Eunice remembered, and so, with their arms around each other, the two hastened down to greet their guests, Mary saying in an undertone on the way: "We met Francis Norman on our way home from meeting. I cannot think why he looked at us so oddly."

Eunice did not reply.

It was five o'clock, and the guests had all departed, when Eunice was summoned to the drawing room to receive Phœbe Anthony and Deborah Longstreth, who had come in due form as a committee, in pursuance of the "mind of the monthly meeting."

Mary Herendean was very anxious, and a tremulous sigh escaped her lips as she followed Eunice into the room where the two women waited for them; but Eunice's manner and bearing were quiet and confident. She received her visitors with demure self-possession, modest, but unabashed, and Mary marveled at the courage of the child.

Phœbe Anthony bore herself with a certain military stiffness and solemnity; Deborah Longstreth, who was a woman of a different strain and knew the motherless girls better, was affectionate and kept up a kind of apologetic purring which evidently displeased her senior.

After a few remarks of a wide and general nature, Phœbe Anthony said pointedly:

"It has come to the knowledge of Friends, Eunice, that thee has been in attendance considerably of late, at a certain place of worship in Minster Street, known as the Church of St. Cuthbert," a name which the good woman pronounced with marked distaste.

Eunice had moved forward a little in her chair, and looked with cheerful assent into the face of the elderly Friend.

"Yes, Phœbe Anthony," she replied respectfully; "and I have been anxious to signify to Friends as quickly as possible the

change in my views. I have given in my request to unite with St. Cuthbert's, and may I ask thee to present my application to Friends to drop my name?"

For a moment the two women sat aghast, staring at the young girl who had so summarily taken the matter out of their hands into her own. There was nothing of impudence or bravado in her speech or bearing; she was serious and gentle, but she held her own easily before the somewhat emasculated arguments which Phœbe Anthony still essayed to summon. The visitors rose and made the best of their retreat, but Deborah Longstreth stopped at the door and purred over Eunice a little more and, kissing her after a motherly fashion, whispered with confidential indulgence, "that perhaps it would have been better if she had gone to St. Peter's; it was pretty high church at St. Cuthbert's, wasn't it?" and so departed.

In the hall, Mary stood and looked in silent wonder at Eunice.

"I did not dream things had gone so far," she said slowly.

"They wouldn't have if those women had let me alone, Mary," replied Eunice. "I had to settle them some way, thee sees. They forced me to bring the whole thing to a de-

cision. Will father mind very much, does thee think?" she asked anxiously.

"He will make no opposition, I know that," Mary answered sadly.

"Dear, dear father," murmured Eunice softly; "I thought he wouldn't."

XVI

MINSTER STREET rises gradually from the square near St. Cuthbert's Church, and after a walk of ten minutes one finds the faded but respectable rows of its lower level giving place to dignified detached mansions, the notably aristocratic houses of Coalport twenty years ago. It was such a house, separated by a massive stone coping and bit of lawn from the street, that Father Norman entered with a latchkey at sunset of that same Wednesday afternoon.

The interior of the house, silent and dim, had something of magnificence in its stately richness, although its appointments spoke plainly of the taste of an earlier day. But the fine old portraits on the walls, the handsome tapestries, the stately staircase, the notable carvings of the furniture, possessed the intrinsic quality which neither age nor custom can disparage.

Father Norman passed through the hall, stopping for a moment to tell a man-servant, who appeared to have been watching for him, that he was to go out to dinner ; ascended the

stairs to the second story, which was silent and empty, as he had found the rooms below. A central gallery gave access to many luxuriously appointed chambers; but, taking a narrow passage at the extreme end, Norman found his way to a small room with one window overlooking the garden at the rear of the house.

The floor of this room was bare; a single light burned upon a desk, above which hung a crucifix, the same which had hung in the room at the Whippany Inn. A porcelain reproduction of Murillo's St. Anthony receiving the infant Christ, was the sole ornament of the room, which had for its furnishings a lining of crowded bookcases around the walls, a narrow iron bed, a Savonarola chair, and a *prie-dieu*.

Laying his shovel hat and greatcoat aside, Father Norman seated himself at his desk, laid a memorandum book open before him, and occupied himself for twenty minutes in copying certain notes from it into a larger book of the same nature. His motions were firm, quick, and definite, those of a man of energy and purpose, working clearly and pointedly on familiar ground, but when the process of copying and filling out his parish notes was accomplished, a certain change came over the man, both in his face and in the expression of his

attitude. His head rested upon one hand, and in his eyes a musing, brooding dreaminess became dominant.

He sat thus, motionless for several moments, with something like a smile on his mouth, and then suddenly he rose and locked his door; then returning to his desk he opened a low drawer and from it took a sheet of common water-color board which bore a hasty and half-finished sketch. Father Norman placed this sketch upon his desk, beneath the drop-light, then stepping back a pace or two he regarded it steadily, with critical scrutiny in which some emotional element was curiously mingled. The sketch showed a dark-haired girl in a white dress of straight, severe outline, passing through a dusky wood, where the trees were like the tall columns of a cathedral. The girl held her hands clasped and dropped before her, her head was lifted on its slender, stem-like throat, the eyes were startled, large, and dark, like the eyes of a fawn. The foreground had been roughly washed-in, the detail was incomplete, but on the margin below, in Father Norman's handwriting, were the lines :

"Thou mystic spirit of the wood,
Why that ethereal grace that seems
A vision of our actual good,
Linked with the land of dreams?"

The lonely man hung long over this picture, which, for all its marks of haste and incompleteness, bore the signal impress of artistic grace and poetic conception. As he looked, his face relaxed its wonted grave austerity, old lines seemed lost, and new and gentler looks came out as if from some deep, unguessed springs of consciousness. Then, with swift recollection, the half-smile died from his face, the sketch was hastily replaced among old papers in the drawer and locked away again, but the hands that touched it did so with reverent tenderness.

Seven o'clock found the rector of St. Cuthbert's one of a dinner company of twelve at the new and splendid residence of Mr. Horatio Barringer.

This function was of high significance, ecclesiastic as well as social, for the guest of honor was no less a person than the newly elected bishop, who was passing through Coalport on a pastoral visitation to the western part of the diocese, and had been waylaid and captured after no little *finessing* by Mrs. Barringer, who was distantly related to his wife.

While Mrs. Barringer had conducted the movements resulting in the visible victory of the evening's event, it was her elder daughter Florence who had seen the opportunity, its

significance and possibility, and whose initiative her mother had readily followed. The relation between the late bishop and the rector of St. Cuthbert's had become considerably strained in consequence of the latter's ritualistic bent, which was regarded by his superior as excessive and undesirable, and likely to lead to various difficulties and to issues greatly to be deprecated. So pronounced had this feeling become that the year before he died the bishop had refused his annual visitation to the church of St. Cuthbert's, and Father Norman's position had been embarrassing in the extreme. It had become a matter of prime importance, as Florence Barringer, who had not a little statesmanship, clearly saw, to capture the new bishop in two senses as speedily as possible, before steps were taken which could not be retraced. Hence this dinner, where it well behooved Father Norman to make the best of his opportunities and establish himself betimes in his bishop's favor.

The occasion was a brilliant one. The great dining room was a marvel of chaste and harmonious splendor, radiant with softly tinted lights, with exquisite flowers, and sumptuous service fit for a bishop or a palace. The bishop was suave and gracious, a man of beautiful, flexible dignity, and a capital *raconteur*.

The host and hostess rejoiced in their high privilege, which reached a series of climaxes when the bishop from time to time would find occasion to say, "You know, Mrs. Barringer, Matilda always says,"—or Matilda does, or desires, or whatever else of a desirable nature might be found to link the present glory to the somewhat modest past through the person of Matilda, wife of the bishop and third cousin of Mrs. Barringer.

Grace Barringer, as younger daughter, was modest and sweet in the most *recherché* version of white muslin and ribbons attainable, but her sister Florence wore a Worth gown of satin and lace, and was as stately and beautiful as some court lady in the splendid days of the Renaissance. Father Norman had never seen her when her beauty and grace were so convincing and even dazzling, and when she spoke to him the triumphant brilliancy of her eyes and smile were softened, and she walked beside him into the dining room with a gentle, lingering step, and a touch upon his arm which said that to him she was after all "a soft, sweet woman," and not a *grande dame*.

As for Norman himself, it had apparently not entered into his heart to conceive that this was his chance to capture the bishop; but the thing which he might have failed to do of set

purpose or design, befell as in the very nature of things, simply from the personality of the two men.

The distinction of Norman's person and manner, the refinement of his mind and speech, the unmistakable spiritual elevation which visibly dwelt in him, united with his highly developed poetic and artistic nature to draw all men like-minded irresistibly to him. The bishop, who had been warned of the rector of St. Cuthbert's as a somewhat dangerous and troublesome factor to be dealt with in the problems of his diocese, was disarmed at once when he met and talked with the man. He compared him instantly with the typical parish priest, with the plodding, mechanical, unilluminated routine men he had met hitherto, and his perception, keener than that of his predecessor, leaped at once to the prestige which a man like Norman conferred upon his diocese. And besides, the ritualists were bound to get the best of it in the next ten years; they were on the incoming wave which would soon be at its flood in this country, as it was in England. Norman might have the fever a little intensely, but it was not dangerous. Let him hear confessions if he liked.

The bishop excused himself early, but not before, in a few casual words, quite as a matter

of course, he had fixed the date of his visitation of St. Cuthbert's with Norman. Florence Barringer heard what he said. After this he might go, as far as she was concerned. He had come, had seen, and *she* had conquered. She turned to Norman with eyes radiant with triumph, the bishop being gone, and held out both her white hands in joyous congratulation. His manner was perfectly quiet, without excitement or elation, but he met her enthusiasm with his rare, cordial smile, which said more than other men's raptures, she fancied.

"You have won," she said under her breath, "and oh, I cannot tell you how happy I am!"

Father Norman bowed a slightly formal acknowledgment. There came a faintly perceptible anxiety into Miss Barringer's face.

"I wanted to bring this about if it were possible, in time, you know."

"You have been everything that is kind," was Father Norman's reply; "it is altogether your doing, Miss Barringer," and at her motion he led the way to a window niche where, in the shadow of some tall ferns, they sat down together to discuss the event, and all that hung upon it.

Tom Ripley meantime had dropped in and was talking with Grace Barringer, not having

heard, he said, of the evening's function, which had been quite impromptu.

"Ah, you may say so!" protested Grace, "but I do not believe you. You know by instinct where Father Norman is to be found; you follow him, just as a bit of steel is drawn to a magnet."

"Then here goes," was the laughing answer, and the young fellow started to cross the room.

"Tom," whispered Grace laughing, and touching his sleeve, "for mercy's sake keep yourself out of Father Norman's sight! If he sees you he will be given over to all the devices and desires of the parish again. Can't you let him alone five minutes? Look at Flo. Isn't she in the seventh heaven? She has him all to herself, and his mood must surely be melting in a degree after all she has done for him. Or do you suppose he doesn't know it? His head is always so high above all our poor little human considerations. Perhaps he wanted to be made a martyr of, who knows?"

"How absurd," returned Ripley; "the bishop is a brick, and I'm awfully glad, I tell you; but dear me, Grace, any bishop with half an eye would try to conciliate Father Norman. There is not his equal in this State, if there is

in the country, and I'll tell you I believe he is going to revolutionize the church in the United States, if you give him time."

"Oh, certainly, that is a very moderate expectation from you, Tom, I should think. But isn't Flo royal to-night? That gown positively marks an epoch."

"Simply stunning. Where from?"

"Worth."

"I thought so. You tell her with my love to continue to patronize him. She is magnificent—nothing less. Ah, Mrs. Knight!" as that lady joined Grace, "good-evening. I am an unbidden guest, but Miss Grace has taken pity on me, and lets me stay, since the grand central luminary has set, so to speak."

"Certainly," retorted Grace; "after sunset the small, little twinkling stars, like Mr. Ripley, come out, the satellites, you know, Mrs. Knight, of our great lights," and she glanced significantly across the room at Father Norman, who had left his seat now, and was beginning to look about vaguely for his hostess.

"Jupiter has risen, Tom," she added saucily; "begin to revolve."

When presently Father Norman joined the group, and stood a little apart listening to their conversation, with Miss Barringer by his side, Mrs. Knight was saying:

"Oh, Mr. Ripley, you always know people and who their grandfathers were, and whom their second cousins married; I wonder if you can't tell me who the fair unknown is, whom Mr. Knight and I have been speculating upon since Sunday."

Tom Ripley bowed ceremoniously. "I am at your service, madam; say on," he replied with oracular brevity.

"Well, this girl, quite young, nineteen perhaps, passed us first on the avenue. The sweetest thing I ever saw"—Mrs. Knight was rapid and emphatic and given to enthusiasm—"in gray!"

Tom Ripley closed one eye and put his head on one side reflectively. "She was beautifully dressed, Mr. Ripley. I know you are a judge, and therefore mention this little fact. Her style was severe, and really rather exquisite, and altogether she had a quite unusual distinction, don't you know?"

Ripley nodded with an air of profound sagacity, and as one whose general informedness would not be found wanting.

"Oh, yes, I forgot her eyes!" Mrs. Knight interjected hastily; "big, dark, pathetic, *spirituelle!* Mr. Knight declares they haunt him. I am more interested to know who is her dressmaker. Well, all this wouldn't matter, but

you see, afterward when we were at church, in she came and sat with Miss Archibald, not far from us, you know, and acted as if she had always been there; but I never saw her before. Now who can she be?"

"There is no particular mystery about it, Mrs. Knight," remarked Florence Barringer, from her place beside Father Norman. Her tone was peculiarly cold, even slighting. "I am sorry to demolish your little romance, but you must mean a Miss Herendean, who lives out beyond you on Willow Street."

"Oh, the little Quaker girl," commented Tom Ripley, with languid surprise and obvious loss of interest; "I did not recognize your description."

"Willow Street!" cried Mrs. Knight with a circumflex accent, evidently disappointed; "not a stranger in Coalport, then?"

"Not at all," said Miss Barringer carelessly; "and really she is not anybody in particular as far as I have ever heard, is she, Tom? It is rather odd too, her coming to our church, for they are a Quaker family."

"Dear, dear," and Mrs. Knight sighed, "to think that I must tell my husband that our beautiful gray *inconnue* is a nobody after all!"

"Nobody, perhaps, to those who do not know her, Mrs. Knight, but not wholly desti-

tute of distinction to those who do. Do not be too deeply disappointed."

It was Father Norman who said these words, with a touch of grave irony. His voice and manner were, as usual, quiet, courteous, reserved, giving the impression of one who was but a spectator in other men's matters; but Florence Barringer, standing at his side, glanced up into his face and noted the unwonted kindling of his eyes with an intuitive sense of dismay.

What availed the conquest of a bishop? What the rescue of his own cause? To what purpose the lustre and brilliancy of to-night's high feast?

Cold at her heart she knew, although how she could not tell, that her own cause was lost.

XVII

IT was between the hours of four and five on the following Wednesday. Mary and Eunice Herendean were seated with Father Norman beside a table in a reception room at the parish house of St. Cuthbert's, and the doors were shut. The table was covered with books and pamphlets, to which the clergyman occasionally referred as he set forth to his catechumen the tenets and theories of the church. Eunice sat before him, her hands clasped in her lap, looking steadfastly into his face as he spoke. Her sister was seated on the other side of the table, and removed from it a short distance.

Father Norman as he spoke and questioned looked into the face of Eunice searchingly but kindly, and from time to time his grave face relaxed into a smile of gentleness and encouragement. Mary he seemed hardly to have observed, after having welcomed her with due courtesy on her coming. Now, however, as he passed on from minor matters to the cardinal doctrines of his system, Father Norman's own profound reverence of nature, and his

high sense of the mystic sacredness of the supreme rites into which it was his duty to indoctrinate his pupil, dominated his manner, his looks, and even the tones of his voice. He spoke in lower tones, with deeper emphasis, and with more authority; his face was grave, even to solemnity, his manner marked by suppressed intensity of feeling.

Eunice watched and listened with bated breath and childlike awe, and bowed her head meek and acquiescent as he said: "This doctrine of the Real, objective Presence in the eucharistic sacrifice is the very center and core of our ritual and our faith. Understand me; under the forms of bread and wine, the priest really offers upon the altar the holy Body and Blood of our Lord in perpetual sacrifice to God. This it is which continues to men the benefits procured upon the cross. So, my child, the sacrifice of the cross and the sacrifice of the mass are one, and——"

At this moment Father Norman was interrupted by a sudden, hasty movement on the part of Mary Herendean. She had risen from her chair; a glance at her face showed that every vestige of color had left it, while the light in her eyes was concentrated into something like white fire. She did not speak, but passed rapidly behind Eunice toward the door.

When she reached the door Father Norman was at her side, confronting her; the hand which she extended to open the door was touched and turned aside by his hand, which was laid quietly upon the knob. Mary Herendean's hand fell by her side, and she trembled as she stood, from head to foot.

"I wish you to let me go, Francis Norman," she said in a low voice, inaudible to Eunice; "I cannot stay to hear the things you are teaching my little sister. I think you forget that we have been taught to believe that our God is a Spirit, to be worshiped in spirit, —in truth."

Father Norman only looked very thoughtfully at Mary as she said this, without speaking, realizing that he had to do with a nature of profound moral earnestness.

"What you are saying is appalling, incredible. Worse, it is not true." Her voice sank lower in the poignancy of her passionate indignation.

Norman's face changed only by a shade of pallor, its composure was unmoved. The matter in hand for him was not to convince Mary Herendean's intellect, there was no time for that, but to control her will and make it conform to his own.

"Pardon me, I think your place is here,"

he said sternly. "Are you not acting under a misapprehension? We are not here on account of your convictions, your belief or disbelief, Mary Herendean, but your sister's."

There was a pause in which the two faced each other steadily, while a little color returned to Mary's face,

"Since you perceive," Father Norman continued slowly, "as I am sure you do, the purpose of your presence here more clearly, I am sure you will not refuse to return to your place with your sister," and he bowed with a motion of his right hand toward her former place, which was gentle, conciliatory even, and yet the action of one who instinctively expected obedience.

The tempest of passion and protest which had swept through the girl's strong nature died away under the steady, quiet mastery of Norman's eyes and voice, but her conviction remained unchanged. The fire in her eyes was quenched with unshed tears, and her lips trembled as she said: "I must yield, I see it plainly. Yes, I will go back; but I have told you the truth, and some time the Spirit will make even this clear to you."

With quiet dignity she returned to her place and so sat without a motion or word through the remainder of the interview, in which Eunice

acquitted herself with admirable docility and teachableness.

The doctrine of transubstantiation had no difficulties for her.

On their way home Eunice broke a long silence, saying to Mary: "I don't know what thee was so stirred up about, but I never saw thee so angry in my life, except once when Ralph beat Beppo."

"Thee need except nothing, Eunice," Mary said quickly; "I never was so angry in my life."

"Well, I'm afraid Father Norman will think thee has the worst disposition in the world, when thee really has the best, unless thee is terribly provoked. Does thee remember his coming in that night at Whippany, when thee lost thy temper so about my going to the service at Torridge?"

"It makes absolutely no difference, Eunice, what Father Norman thinks of me," Mary replied; "but in fact he never does think of me at all. I have never interested him in the least."

"Thee has always opposed him, thee sees," rejoined Eunice, "and he has seen thy worst side and has had to make thee give up."

"No matter, Eunice; please don't talk about it any more," said Mary hastily; but her

cheeks had grown crimson, and there was an expression in her eyes which Eunice did not understand, and which she had never seen in them before.

As they entered the house on their return, Mary seeing letters lying on a tray on the hall rack, took them up, and handing one to Eunice said casually: "Another letter from Derby, from Cousin Cynthia for thee. She is getting to be a very devoted correspondent, isn't she? I never fancied you two would have so much in common," and Mary went on into the dining room to give a housekeeper's glance at the preparations for dinner.

Eunice, whose color had deepened while Mary spoke, had taken her letter and now ran lightly upstairs to her room, which she entered, locking the door behind her. With quick, eager motion she broke the seal of the envelope, and drew out an enclosed letter directed in Ralph Kidder's handwriting to herself. This letter her eyes flew over with devouring haste, while alternating expressions of delight and disturbance passed over her face.

Ralph supposed, the letter said, that she would shortly hear a new set of anathemas pronounced upon his devoted head by her father, if she had not already; but she must be steady, and let nothing frighten her. He had, it was

true, unintentionally overdrawn his account at the First National Bank in Coalport, and he found himself sufficiently embarrassed for the moment, but it was a small matter, and would be rectified shortly.

Possibly he had been a little extravagant, for there never was such a place to spend money without knowing it, as New York. If she had only been there with him he would have smothered her in red roses, no matter what they cost,—his beautiful little lady-love,—and made her music-mad as he was, with grand opera. And wouldn't he have been quite right to do it? etc., etc., at which turn the cloud passed from Eunice's brow, and the sun came out again.

There was only time to read the letter once, and that hastily, a letter which was well worth a dozen readings, and then it must be hidden well and wisely, while she donned her white gown and hastened down to dinner with her father and Mary.

Mary looked worn and dispirited at dinner, and excused herself soon after it was over, and went upstairs. An hour later she came down with slow, quiet steps, and stood for a little space at the open library door, looking in. Her father was sitting in his great arm-chair before the open fire, his profile sharply outlined by the light of the red coals; there was little

light besides in the room. At his feet on a low stool sat Eunice, in her lustrous white gown, her head resting against her father's knee in a pensive, drooping fashion. The old man's slender, delicate hand was laid upon the girl's head. They were not speaking, but they were together in spirit, and a tender peace rested in Moses Herendean's brooding eyes.

Mary watched them for a moment, and her eyes filled with tears; then she turned away, a pang unspeakable at her heart.

How lovely Eunice was; how her father's heart delighted in her; and yet just now she had betrayed all of spiritual integrity for which he had lived and would gladly have died; she had sold her birthright without so much as a sigh or word of misgiving, and she could return and sit at his feet in that pure peace, unconscious and undisturbed.

If that had been all! But it was enough for Mary Herendean that night.

In his room in the Minster Street mansion, on that same night, Francis Norman kept a long unbroken vigil. The interview of the afternoon, with its varying effect upon the sisters, had had a deeper working upon him, stirring within him keen questionings to be met through the long hours of the night on his knees with prayer and penance.

The words of Mary Herendean, swift and piercing, had aroused again that specter of doubt which crouched ever at his door, ready to spring upon him and close with his soul in fierce encounter. She had stood before him like an accusing angel, or like a stern Nemesis, confronting him with the guilty misgivings of his under consciousness—that whisper sternly rejected, yet never quite stilled, even in moments of highest exaltation in the performance of his public duties.

But beside Mary Herendean, and not to be divided from her in his thought, stood the gentler figure of her young sister, never so endearing as in this aspect of devout religious dedication. Not to recall that clear face, with its "paleness of the pearl," the soft, appealing eyes, the childlike mouth, the simple, unstudied words, so far from the conventional phraseology to which his ears were accustomed?—to forget all that?—banish it from his memory, cast out from his heart the lovely vision—was it in his mortal flesh to do this?

The night wore on in its two-fold struggle. When the dawn came Francis Norman, his face gray and haggard, rose from his knees, took from its place the sketch of Eunice Herendean which he had made in the summer, and burned it on his cold, unlighted hearth.

The following afternoon found Father Norman in "lower Coalport," going about among the wretched tenements of the miners in pursuance of his pastoral labors.

Coming down from the garret abode of Mrs. Ahern, the helpless and thriftless mother of a small boy, Joey, whom he had recently discovered as possessed of a wonderful voice, and literally nothing else, Norman reached the outer air of the dreary alley with his face pallid from the odors of the place, and from an inward sinking resulting from prolonged fasting and his late vigil.

As he stood for an instant in the doorway, a man who was passing at a swinging, resolute gait, glanced at him, wheeled around abruptly, and stopped short in front of him on the dirty, broken pavement.

"Father Norman!" he exclaimed. "Glad to see you; but you're looking badly. Going home? All right," and Norman joining him, they walked down the alley together.

This man, known as the Reverend James Hope, a title to which Father Norman would not, however, have admitted his claim, as he was not of the Church, was a familiar figure in this part of Coalport, having established here a Christian work among the miners' families. In person he was big and muscular, a robust,

virile, thoroughly masculine man, who could hold his own physically with any of the neighborhood ruffians, as they very well knew; but in spirit he was gentle, winning, and devout. Father Norman liked and respected Hope, and the two, although working on widely different lines, and with absolutely divergent ecclesiastical theories, not infrequently met and took counsel together concerning the sorrows of the very poor.

James Hope lived half a mile from the Ahern tenement, and when the two men had reached the house he said cordially: "Come up and have some tea with me, Norman. It would be a great pleasure to Mrs. Hope; honestly, it would do her all sorts of good. You know she hardly ever sees people now."

Norman was glad to consent, and followed Hope into a large, well-lighted room on the ground floor, where a company of women and girls were breaking up, evidently at the close of a sewing-school.

"It's the girls this afternoon," Hope remarked; "boys to-night."

A pretty and graceful woman who was in charge of the gathering glanced at him across the room with a nod and smile. Hope telegraphed with signs to her that he was taking Norman upstairs, and would expect her to fol-

low; she caught the message at once, and nodded again with a slight flush of pleasure.

A few rooms upstairs were reserved for the present use of the Hopes; otherwise the house was given up to the purposes of their neighborhood work. These rooms were furnished simply, but with refinement and artistic perception and cozy comfort. There were excellent prints, books in abundance, and a dainty tea service stood ready for the afternoon refreshment. The difference between this place and his own abode came instantly before Norman's mind. Here the grace of a woman's touch was everywhere, a touch which had made a home in these dreary surroundings, in these poor rooms.

Very soon Mrs. Hope came in and took her place at the tea table, glad to see Father Norman, whom she knew slightly, but gladder to see her husband, as her eloquent eyes could not fail to tell him. She made their tea so quietly that Norman, though he was watching her, did not see her do it, and was surprised to find the big, thin blue cup in his hand, how he hardly knew. Refreshed and enlivened by the tea and bit of cake, Norman felt a new comfort and ease, and a vivid sense of pleasure in the personality of his companions. How perfectly these two people suited one another;

how each could fill up what the other lacked in the practical work of life; how it kept a man steady in purpose and happy at heart to have such a presence and smile to return to, and a veritable home, if it were only two rooms over a public place!

Meanwhile Hope, in his hearty fashion, was talking on about the difficulties and encouragements of the work, and proceeded to tell Norman plainly that he believed more and more that almsgiving was the wrong line to take with these people.

"But, my dear fellow," said Norman smiling, as he leaned lazily back in a very comfortable chair, "almsgiving is a Christian grace, and it is absolutely necessary to the development of our wealthy church-members. They must give or die, don't you see?"

"Then let them give to agencies which will make these people self-dependent, give them trades, the ability to work and earn their own living. The helplessness of the girls in these families is the worst factor of the whole problem. I tell you, Father Norman, many of these rescue efforts are rose water to a man mortally sick. We have got to go behind these measures that only mend the results a little and begin at the foundation."

Father Norman looked thoughtfully at Hope.

The grace of charity had not come to him in quite this rugged and severe outline.

"But surely no command is more plainly or more frequently impressed in the New Testament than that of feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, giving alms of such things as we possess," he returned.

"Very well, but different civilizations demand different adjustments of this grace of giving, and these are times that call for not less bounty, but bounty otherwise applied. Father Norman, it is not possible for you, off there in Minster Street, with all the beauty and aristocracy of the city around you, to guess, even by coming down here once in a while, what the temper of these people is, and how real and appalling the dangers that are deepening upon them, and through them upon us."

"Now, James, Father Norman is tired, and you must stop talking all this tiresome shop," Mrs. Hope broke in gently. "Indeed, I get tired myself of 'problems' and possibilities, and it would do us good to forget them for a while. Father Norman, what I want to ask is whether you have seen this new life of Pugin that I hear so much about?"

Yielding to her initiative, the conversation turned to books and art, and at the end of

half an hour Father Norman, refreshed in body and spirit, took a half-reluctant leave of James Hope and his wife, and came away.

Was such a marriage as this to be thought of as a lowering of the religious life? Ah, but Hope was not a priest, only a "minister." Still, as Norman walked home in the twilight, he was half minded to wish he had not destroyed that sketch in the early morning.

XVIII

THE winter had passed. March had come, and it was late in the month. Four o'clock was chiming from St. Cuthbert's belfry tower.

A girlish figure crossing the square turned into Minster Street and approached the church with light, hasty step. It was Eunice Herendean. She was dressed in black, although plainly not in mourning, and wore a veil of black tissue, through which her eyes shone out even darker and more lustrous than their wont, while her face was startlingly pale.

Notwithstanding a perceptible accession of confidence and self-possession in her general bearing, there was an evident nervous trepidation upon Eunice now. When she reached the church steps she tripped in her haste, and the hand with which she pushed open the heavy oak door trembled visibly. Passing through the cold, empty vestibule, Eunice entered the church, which was also empty, save for two or three persons kneeling alone and silent in separate pews.

The afternoon sun passing through the richly

stained windows lighted the lofty church but dimly. Above the high altar, in a pendent bronze lamp, burned a single blood-red light, indicating the reservation of the sacrament; and as she saw this light Eunice sank for a moment upon her knees, and bent her head in an attitude of prayer. She had advanced rapidly in the new way in the months since she first went with Miss Barringer to the little church in Torridge. She did not, however, make the sign of the cross as a more perfect pupil of the ritualistic school would have done. Doubtless that would come in time, but the girl's Quaker breeding had not lost all its power over her yet.

Along the walls of the church, between the painted stations of the cross, were carved and curtained confessionals, consisting each of two alcoves connected only by a grated window in the partition wall. In the dusky dimness which filled the place, one light burned brightly above the entrance to one of these. As she rose from her knees in the heavy hush and silence, and moved slowly down the aisle in the direction of this light, a strange faintness came over Eunice. Entering a pew she knelt and buried her face in her hands. Tears trickled through her fingers. She rose hastily, pulled her gloves from her hands, and pushed away her

veil, then sat, her face like marble, looking fixedly before her. There was not in all the great, dim place a sound or motion. The women who had been kneeling in their places when she entered knelt still, motionless, careless of who might come or go. Were they praying? Eunice wondered a little, or being sorry for their sins? or only aching in their hearts and glad to be where their hearts could ache with no one to know or question?

She had grown quiet, and now she took from her pocket a small leaflet, and kneeling again she began to murmur, quite to herself, the series of brief supplications which it contained, as, "Kind Lord Jesus, crowned with thorns for my sins, make me sorry for them."

Her thoughts gradually took order, and she was able to consider clearly what she was about to do, for she had come to the church this Friday afternoon in penitential guise, for the declared purpose of making confession and seeking priestly absolution.

Without doubt she would confess that she had sinned exceedingly in being vexed many times of late when Mary had disapproved of the practices of the church, and when Friends had made unpleasant comments upon it. This had been a grievous sin, and for it she was truly penitent. So also for the folly and vanity

of an undue interest in her dress and appearance; and so on through a variety of amiable weaknesses. All this was comparatively simple. As for the self-absorption and self-seeking of her nature, it was too complete and all-enclosing to be perceived by herself, and so escaped the analysis.

But what of the one great burden which lay upon her conscience? Could she lay that bare? Could she lay it down? This was the supreme intent with which she had come, but could she in very deed carry out that intent? Could she even wish to? and if she did, was it certain to avail her? A man's face seemed again bent above her, and a familiar voice to be saying in her ear, "I have a power over you which you cannot resist, and which will draw you back to me, however far you may seek to fly beyond my reach."

Eunice's clasped hands hung over the back of the seat before her; her forehead was pressed hard against the cold, polished wood. For the time, in the intensity of her thought, she had lost the sense of her surroundings, of her bodily presence and being. Through the silence, from some unseen space, there came a sound just then of music, a child's voice, sweet and pure, chanting the *Magnificat*. Eunice knew the voice. It was that of the

forlorn little prodigy from the iron mines, whom Father Norman had discovered in his ministrations among the poor. They were training him now for the choir.

As she listened Eunice trembled, for a sense of something incredible and against the nature of things in her purposed action smote upon her with the familiar strains, high and noble in their suggestion. To lay bare her heart, and the darkest recesses of it, before another, and that other Father Norman, in his austere, spiritual elevation; to seek through his explicit forgiveness that of the Most High; to place herself before him, so high above her, in a manner so intensely personal—how could such a thing be?

Could she forget that he was he, and she, herself, Eunice Herendean, and speak to him only as to the priest, not as to the man who had walked beside her, who had talked with her gently and looked into her face with that delicate kindness which belonged to all his people, and yet with an indescribable something superadded which had thrilled her with a mysterious sense of possibilities? And yet, others had done just this thing, and in a way she longed to do it too. There was a certain picturesque element in such a situation which strongly appealed to her. But, far beyond

that, she honestly desired peace and rest for the small torments of her soul; she craved the moral sedative of a human voice pronouncing her worst not too bad to be forgiven—the refuge of weak natures through all time—secretly, underlying all, she was willing for Father Norman to know what she was about to renounce. For Eunice's constancy to her lover had faltered and failed, blighted by the recklessness and dishonor which had lately been laid to his charge. There were fitful, fluctuating moods when her heart still yearned passionately after him, but she felt, none the less, that his day for her was over; another figure, nobler than his, was rising, though in dim outline and remote, on her horizon.

But now the thought came suddenly, What if Father Norman should not come himself? Eunice knew that his assistant often heard confessions. Very likely he would send Mr. Parke this afternoon, knowing that she was coming. He often seemed to avoid her of late, she thought, and even in the confirmation class to speak coldly and sternly to her.

"Oh, dear," she sighed to herself, in her childish, grieving fashion, "it will be so dreadful if he does not come himself! And yet, if he does, I think I shall die."

There was a step on the floor of the aisle.

A tall figure was approaching from the chancel in the long black cassock, wearing the beretta. It was Father Norman. Through the door which had opened behind him came a fresh burst of the music, again the sweet, high voice chanting the words:

"He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
And exalted them of low degree."

A sudden calmness fell upon Eunice, and her inner trembling ceased. She knew that Father Norman had come very near; she knew that he had entered the confessional close at hand; one of the kneeling figures had arisen and followed him, entering the adjoining alcove; the others had left the church. She was alone. That Father Norman had seen her was certain, and not less so that he held her name as having desired the opportunity for confession at this hour. To retreat was impossible. To hold herself steady was all that was left.

One of the clairvoyant moments which comes in hours of intense excitement to persons of acute susceptibility came to Eunice just then. She knew exactly what would take place in the next half-hour, and she knew that in the purpose to which she would commit herself the very issues of life for her might be in-

volved, but she was no longer afraid. She still knelt, mechanically repeating the little litany in the book by her side. When, presently, the door was opened, and some one left the confessional and withdrew, she rose quietly, entered, and shut the door.

XIX

IT was five o'clock when the door of the confessional opened and Eunice stepped again into the aisle. She was pale as before, and her breath came quick and fluttering. Returning to the seat which she had left, she knelt, according to the prescribed form, to return thanks for the grace which had been vouchsafed her. While she was thus kneeling, Father Norman came from the opposite side of the confessional, and walked down the long, dusky aisle, disappearing into the unknown regions behind the choir.

Eunice distinctly heard his retreating footsteps, but she heard nothing more. Even as she knelt, the spaces around her grew into a whirling blackness, and her prayers were lost in a close and unavailing struggle to retain her consciousness. The struggle ceased abruptly and she sank fainting upon the floor of the pew, unseen and unnoticed. The strain to which she had subjected herself had proved over-great.

Meanwhile, the hour for closing the church

having come and the building being to all appearance empty, the great doors of entrance were securely locked, all lights save the red spark over the altar were extinguished, and the church was closed for the night.

When Eunice recovered consciousness and a sense of what had befallen her, her first effort was to rise, and after a few moments in which she rallied her spent forces, with all the strength of will of which she was possessed, she moved with slow and faltering steps to the vestibule, and sought access to the street, but in vain. Every door was securely fastened.

Frightened and trembling, she made her way back into the church and down the central aisle to the chancel, hoping to see there some lingering attendant, but the place was empty and deserted, and the dead Christ on the marble reredos behind the altar showed ghastly and awful in the gloom, for the brief winter twilight was merging into dark.

Something like terror overmastered Eunice, as she felt her way along the cold, polished pavement of the aisle to the right of the choir. Beyond were chapels, she knew, and the sacristy. Her only chance to escape a night of untold dread was to grope her way to some door of entrance into one of these small rooms, and from there find means of exit.

More by feeling than by sight she came at last to a door and clasped the knob in both her hands. It turned, but the door was locked. A great sob rose up in her throat, and although she did not know it, tears fell hot and fast down her cheeks. Her limbs shook under her, and the former faintness seemed sweeping toward her like a great surge of darkness, overflowing darkness. She had taken a few steps blindly forward, when her hand struck against another door knob. In despair, rather than in hope, she turned it, pushing with the last remnant of her strength against the panels. The door opened at once into a small, high, and brightly lighted room. This room, strictly ecclesiastical in all its appointments, was furnished with shelves of books and with a great polished table, before which stood a chair of carved oak with a tall Gothic frame.

In this chair Father Norman was seated, writing. A young choir boy was engaged behind him in arranging piles of pamphlets on some shelves.

With a low cry of joy and release, Eunice held out her hands; her face was ghastly white, and her eyes were fixed upon Father Norman's face with the piteous imploring of a frightened child.

Dazzled by the light and the sharp surprise, and scarcely conscious of what occurred, Eunice could never recall how it came to pass that an instant later she found herself seated in Father Norman's Gothic chair, her head resting against its carved panels, and her hands, which were icy cold, held firmly in a warm, invigorating clasp. The small boy presently ran up and held out in a rough, red little hand, a glass of water which dropped plenteously down the folds of her dress as he lifted it to her lips.

Eunice drank a little, and the color came back to her face.

"I was faint in the church," she said, looking up into Father Norman's face, which was bent above her, full of serious concern. "I do not know how long it lasted, but when I could move they had locked the doors. O Father Norman, I was so frightened," and she cried a little with the thought of it.

"I should have taken better care of you," he said; "I ought to have foreseen that what would be simple to others would be to you an intense ordeal. A nature like yours ——" and he broke off abruptly. "You had been fasting too, I have no doubt?" and he looked down with a kind of severe gentleness into her face.

"Yes, all day," she answered simply.

"You must not do it, my child." Father Norman spoke with the authority which seemed instinctive rather than acquired in him. "It is not for such as you," and he smiled as he released her hands, and apparently, unconsciously to himself, brushed back with a swift, gentle motion the hair which had fallen down her face, retreating at once, when he had done so, to the end of the table.

"Be a good child, and let your sins go for a while. You are not so very bad," a whimsical amusement added to his usual gravity.

"Oh, I thought I was more wicked than any one!" murmured Eunice, the tears starting again. "I have been so distressed."

He shook his head gravely. "We must think about this some day, but just now I am going to send you home as soon as possible. Joey," and Father Norman turned to the small boy who had been kneeling at the opposite side of the table with his chin resting on his hands, regarding Eunice with round, wondering eyes, "Joey, my boy, you are to stay here and watch this young lady while I go out and bring back a cab and one of the sisters to take her out to Willow Street, for you and I know that it would not do the least in the world to send her alone."

Joey, who was Father Norman's new *protégé*, sprang to his feet in instant alarm.

"No, Father Norman," he exclaimed, speaking with a slight but unmistakable Irish accent, "I'll run for the hack or anythin' ye please, but don't ye be leavin' me here alone in the church with the young lady. Sure, she'd be like to take sick agin, an' if she was for faintin', honest, Father Norman, I wouldn't dare stay a minute, I'd be that frightened."

"I'll promise not to faint again, Joey," said Eunice ; but Joey shook his head, unconvinced.

"Well," said Father Norman, "here is a situation equal to the fable of the fox and the goose and the bag of corn ! What shall I do? The proprieties will not permit me to let Joey do the errand ; Joey's fears will not permit me to do it——"

At this point Eunice sprang to her feet with sudden energy.

"Don't get up," said Father Norman ; "I like to see you there," and his eyes said more than his words.

"I feel as if I was on your throne," said Eunice, coloring, "and I don't belong there, you know." His look and the way he spoke to her had the stimulating effect upon her of wine. "I am going home now, and I am

going to walk home. I don't want any sisters nor any cabs nor any one to go home with me," and with a few touches to her hat and dress, she stepped toward the door, which she rightly guessed led into a cross street.

"Very well," said Father Norman. "Possibly the walk will do you good. Put on your coat, Joey," and he disappeared for a moment into another room.

Eunice waited perforce, unable to open the door, and in another moment the two were at her side, dressed for the street. Eunice tried to protest, but Father Norman simply drew her hand through his arm and walked on through the dark, slippery street as if it were altogether a matter of course.

"But what will people say?" she murmured, as they entered a better-lighted thoroughfare, knowing well the extreme importance attached to every movement of the rector of St. Cuthbert's, and the scrupulous care with which he habitually held himself aloof from women.

"That I am an excessively fortunate man," rejoined Norman quickly. "Joey, stick close to my heels. Follow me like a shadow, my boy. Miss Eunice feels the need of a chaperon."

Eunice laughed in spite of herself. But

what change was this which had come over Father Norman? She hardly knew him for himself in this gay, ironical, masterful mood.

In a moment Norman stopped before a small, brightly lighted shop, a dairy, with gleaming, white-tiled walls. Without comment he drew Eunice in and stood before the spotless marble counter. Joey, with eyes wide with wonder, guarded the door.

"A glass of milk, if you please," Norman said quickly to the trim damsel who presided over the place.

Eunice watched the proceedings as if she were without power of action or volition. Indeed, the whole scene had to her consciousness the aspect of a dream: this small, dazzling white place, like some fabulous cavern; she, faint and dizzy, standing with all the lights converging on her, and Father Norman, the remote, august priest, with whom all the small concerns of life had hitherto seemed impossible, holding out to her a glass of milk, and bidding her drink it with that kind, almost caressing voice, and the new, strange smile in his eyes. Surely, all things were changed.

As for Norman, the change in him was far greater than the girl dreamed or could have compassed in her imagination. Something which he had been building up for years with

prayer and discipline and aspiration, had in that little hour in the room they had left but now, crumbled to ashes, falling before the flame of a passion smothered for months by all the strength of his will, but bursting out at last, if not beyond his power, at least beyond his wish to control. And in that hour, at least, he saw the ruins of his ideal without regret, rather with exultation. A sense of freedom and release had taken possession of him. He was, after all, a man like other men, with the right of other men to seek the joy and crown of life! No vows or bonds held him back. That youthful ideal had had its day and its uses, but its day was over. "The King is dead. Long live the King!"

Such were the hidden motions of Norman's spirit as he stood and watched Eunice while she obediently drank the milk, looking up to him now and then with eyes full of childlike wonder.

As they passed on down the Coalport street, through the alternating glare and gloom of the electric lights, past common, sordid trading places, graceless and forlorn, Francis Norman seemed to himself to be walking on air, to be "wrapt in blaze . . . by a minute's birth—through the love in a girl!"—a little meek, white thing whom he could make faint by a

word or look of severity and yet imperious and formidable in the invisible power which she held over him.

The day of his destiny had come and he hurried to meet it, no hand holding him back.

That night Eunice Herendean, in her still chamber at home, wrote to Ralph, her cousin, that she had come to look upon their past relation as deceitfulness and sin ; that she was about to take upon herself solemn vows of dedication, and she wished to renounce every evil way and enter upon her new life with a clear conscience and an honest heart. She therefore begged him to release her, as she did him, from every promise and pledge which held them, and, always praying for his good and for his return to a better life, she must consider herself from this time forth as no more than his good friend and cousin.

To this decorous and succinct epistle Eunice shortly received the following reply :

My Precious Simpleton :

The religious business is very nice and becoming, but transparent. I can't release you on that score. If you care for another man, why that is a different story. I shall never let you go until you tell me with your own lips that you love another man better than you love me. I can't come to Coalport just now for obvious reasons, but I shall have my difficulties smoothed out before long, and in May I shall see you, whether

you will or no, and let you tell me the truth. These pious platitudes, Eunice, may deceive the elect, but the non-elect can see through them.

Yours, RALPH.

It was but a fortnight later that "society," which is not always indifferent to the records of its own doings, was busied with the following paragraph in a Coalport journal :

It is perhaps months or even years since our inner circle of society has been stirred with a sensation equal to that awakened by the engagement of the Rev. Francis Norman, rector of St. Cuthbert's Church, to Miss Eunice, second daughter of our venerable Quaker citizen, Moses Herendean. It is very well known that Father Norman has been the center of an ardently admiring circle of fashionable and charming women ; but it has been further reported at least that he was not only averse to marriage, but would probably sooner or later embrace the vows of one of the Episcopal celibate orders. The young lady who has been able to rival Coalport's society belles and to conquer the distinguished rector's ascetic tendencies is described as possessed of beauty and charm in a high degree. She has hitherto lived a life of strictest retirement in the old family mansion in Willow Street, but she will undoubtedly, as the *fiancée* of the rector of St. Cuthbert's, find the arms of our best society opened wide to receive her.

This paragraph received its share of animated discussion at the Barringers' breakfast table. Miss Barringer alone was silent, join-

ing neither in sarcasm nor incredulous amazement. Her sole comment as she rose from the table was,

"Isn't Rebecca a Quaker name? It seems to me it would have suited our young friend better than Eunice."

XX

IN May, in the early evening, Francis Norman was walking up and down his narrow room.

His aspect was not that of a happy and complacent lover or of a satisfied man. A noticeable change had taken place in him, for his characteristic melancholy had deepened to profound gloom, his face was gaunt and hollow-eyed, and the hands, clasped hard behind him as he walked, showed a thinness approaching emaciation.

There was upon him, at this hour, in his solitude, the impress of a mental struggle desperate in its reality. There was no resort to postures, or pictures, or even to prayer. The principalities and powers against which he wrestled seemed to be beyond the reach of weapons like these; this, or the man had thrown down his arms in act to surrender.

Upon the desk which he passed and repassed in his steady pacing to and fro stood the porcelain of Murillo's Saint Anthony receiving the Infant Christ. As he walked, a nervous haste seemed to grow upon Norman,

and with a sudden gesture he threw both arms wide as one who would put away from him with power the advance of something supremely dreaded.

There was a shivering crash on the bare floor, and Norman turned on his heel to see that in his hasty movement he had struck and thrown from the desk the picture of the saint. His first impulse was to stoop with quick concern to gather the broken pieces, but he drew back, lifting his head with a wan smile of inexpressible sadness.

"To what use?" he murmured to himself. "'*The gone thing was to go.*' Let it go. All that it stood for has gone already."

He turned again and touched the broken porcelain with his foot, with bitter musing in his eyes.

"There it lies—as my life thus far—a picture, an image, a vision, a dream, not a reality! And even that—broken. So be it. God! what is next?"

Rallying himself with a strong effort, Norman left the room. Half an hour later he was on his way to Willow Street to call upon Eunice and accompany her to a reception at Mrs. Knight's on the avenue. It was a quiet evening, full of scents and suggestions of the season's loveliness, and the street at the side

of the Herendean estate was almost like a country lane, and under the budding trees and with the sweet, indefinable softness of the spring it looked a pretty place for lovers to walk. Norman saw a man sauntering idly under the trees in the shadow of the wall and thought it would be good to be free like that, waiting perhaps for your sweetheart to join you and go out under the stars in the stillness, instead of to the lights and music and the whirl of men and women. But, Eunice, he knew, was full of eager and delighted anticipation of the brilliant occasion awaiting them, where, she rightly guessed, she would herself be the object of most vivid interest.

The hour was early, but Norman found the somber old library irradiated by a vision in glistening silk and gauze, standing under the gaslight and seeming to flood the room with her lustre.

Eunice greeted her lover with a smile of childish coquetry, and held out her hand to him in a playfully imperious gesture. Her eyes were dancing with excitement, and a bright color in her cheeks made her beauty fairly dazzling. Norman stood and watched her in silence. Mary, in quiet home dress, was adjusting some ribbons at her waist.

"Oh, do hurry, Mary dear!" Eunice ex-

claimed, moving restlessly; "I feel as if I could not stand another minute."

"Why, dear, thee is not tired already?" said Mary, with quick solicitude, for Eunice's delicate health was always her anxiety.

"No, no," was the impatient reply, "but I want to be all by myself and keep still a little while before I go. I did not expect you, sir, for a long time yet. The carriage will not be here for half an hour, and I am not ready to see anybody. My poor little heart beats itself almost to pieces when I think of all those people who will stare at me to-night. I am going into the morning room. Please don't come after me—any one. Good-bye!" and with a flashing smile at Norman as she passed, Eunice ran from the room, closing the door after her. Father Norman and Mary faced each other alone.

Two months before, Mary, coming in from the street, had found Father Norman, much to her surprise, sitting alone in their library. He was waiting to see Moses Herendean, who was expected in a few moments. It was the first time that Mary had seen Norman since their stormy passage in the parlor at the parish house. What had brought him here now she dimly, intuitively guessed—the key had been in her hand ever since a certain misty morning

in Whippany. Certainly she did not pause to conjecture or question, but with firm, unhesitating step, walked straightway up to Father Norman, who rose quickly from his place, and holding out her still gloved hand said, quite without self-consciousness :

"I have wanted to see you, and I am glad you are here. I have your pardon to ask for my anger that day when I was with Eunice. Whatever I felt I should have kept to myself. I have seen it since, and I am very sorry," and she looked humbly but without faltering into his eyes.

"I have more need than you for penitence," Norman said gently, smiling. "It was not easy for either of us, and I hated myself afterward for what must have seemed unpardonable harshness. Then can we agree, Mary Herendean, to be friends?" and Mary gave him her hand once more in token of peace and understanding.

In the weeks following, in which it came to pass that Father Norman appeared very often in the Herendean home, and soon in the character of Eunice's suitor, he and Mary had met always in friendly fashion and found many common interests; but until to-night, whether by accident or by Mary's intention, they had never been left alone together.

Norman threw himself now into a leather study chair and exclaimed with a long breath:

"The child is very lovely!"

Mary had betaken herself to a basket of sewing under the lamplight, seeing no way to escape, as she gladly would have done, a somewhat prolonged interview. She noted the tone in which he spoke to her. It was as he would have spoken to Eunice's mother, had she been alive.

"Very lovely, but not a child any more, Francis Norman," was her quiet response.

After a moment's pause she continued: "Eunice used to seem to me like a little wild wood-anemone,—the windflower, you know,—shy and white, with old, dry leaves rustling stiffly about her feet from the time gone by," and Mary smiled at her own fancy. "I have seen the flower often in the woods, growing almost at the edge of a snow drift, with its few, single petals as cold and white as the snow."

"Yes, I see it all so far," replied Norman, his head sunk in his hands, studying the parallelograms of the old-fashioned carpet mechanically; "go on, please. Let me know the havoc I have wrought." he added grimly. "I believe the botanists say that the flower you speak of suffers from having the earth

loosened around it, and that it should be left as far as possible untouched. I suppose the likeness holds."

Mary ignored the last remark.

"Now she seems to me like a rose, rich and brilliant, full of color and perfume, and with many folds upon folds of desire and feeling, complex, mysterious—not the child any more."

"Well," he said, waiting to see if she had more to say, "men welcome the windflower, but they worship the rose."

"Only the change has come so suddenly and it is so unexpected. I did not know," she concluded with a little laugh, "that one could turn a windflower into a rose even by the development process."

"Oh, yes," he said wearily, throwing his head back against the chair, "you can. Particularly if the windflower happens to be a rosebud."

Mary looked up. His tone and manner were unlike himself. She was startled at the haggard wretchedness of his face, which she had not noticed until then.

"You are not well," she exclaimed with sincere concern; "please tell me if I can do anything for you," and she looked steadily into his face.

For answer he only said inconsequently :

" How firm and steady your hands are. I like to see you sew. I fancy they are cool too, and I know your pulse is strong and even. Touch my wrist a moment."

Mary laid her hand, with a nurse's instinct, on his pulse. It was galloping after a reckless fashion and his hand was hot and tremulous. She laid it back quietly upon the leather arm of the chair.

"Will you tell me what it is?" she asked directly. "Something is quite wrong with you to-night."

Francis Norman looked at her with a solemn question in his eyes.

" Could anything shake your faith in God ?" he asked.

Mary knew that such a question from such a man must be asked with grave purpose. She paused a little space, her face grown as thoughtful as his own. Then lifting her eyes and shedding the luminous radiance which dwelt in them upon the face of Norman, so harried and worn with conflict, she said simply :

" I believe—nothing could ; by his grace."

XXI

FATHER NORMAN looked at Mary, gravely musing, holding his hands before him, the finger tips pressed hard together.

"That is as I thought," he said; "then I have almost a mind to answer your question. It would be an ease to me to speak; I have been weak enough to long for that kind of relief, as a sedative, perhaps; but the trouble was to meet any one whose faith was proof against contagion, and also one who personally would not suffer by learning this experience of mine. You can see how impossible it is for me to speak of this to Eunice."

Mary bent her head slightly in acquiescence, but the hand which held her work tightened hard its grasp and she did not raise her eyes.

"You gave me a little parable just now," he said, smiling faintly, "of a flower. Let me give you one. Imagine a man who has been most solemnly pledged to guard and also to beautify and adorn a magical veil or curtain, which hung, he was told, before a sublime mystery, the highest conceivable. The man

accepts the mystery—the Awful Presence thus veiled—implicitly, and sets about adorning this mystic veil with every beautiful thing which could find place in its texture. He weaves into it, we will say, the beauty of art and music, of color and fragrance, of flowers and fair children, of saints and angels, and the sacrifice of a whole soul's devotion—poor enough that, surely," Norman added, with abrupt self-scorn; "but even so, the man's best, and given as counting nothing too dear to give—do you see?" he asked suddenly, looking at Mary with piercing earnestness.

"I think I understand," she said.

"Very well. But then all this is not so simple as it seems, for, do you know?" and Norman's face darkened and his voice sank to an impassioned undertone, "every now and then as the man I describe worked on and guarded the veil, a horrible breath would come to him, whispering that behind it was—*nothing*—emptiness, no holy thing, no glorious mystery, no life-giving, boundless power and love—but bare space, as in the Holiest when the Roman soldiers penetrated to its recesses. When this whisper came the man only labored more unceasingly to perfect the beauty of the veil. Poor fool, to dream that the outer richness could fill the inner emptiness!"

There was a brief silence between them and then Norman went on with less passion than before :

"One day something happened to this man, whose life was being almost drained by the struggle against this whisper, for do you know it is easier to fight almost anything than a whisper? This thing which happened was that the poor fellow said : 'I will not give all my heart's best to the veil ; something I will keep, as other men do, for myself; I will have my own life and love and joy under the sun.' So he grasped the most beautiful thing which he had ever known—grasped it, not to make the veil beautiful, but for himself. It has an ugly sound, but it is the bare truth. Can you fancy what followed or what seemed to this man to follow?"

"The veil grew dim?"

"Not that alone ; it shriveled, it shrank, it crumbled and fell to the earth before him, and behind was—*nothing.* Only mocking voices seemed to cry in laughter what he had only heard in sad whispers before."

There was again a little silence. The faces of both were white and awed. Then Norman said hoarsely :

"If you want to know what agony is, understand that this parable has been made true in

my life and pity me if you like." He buried his face in his hands and his whole frame shook with a fierce trembling.

"You have prayed, Francis Norman?" Mary asked.

"There is nothing which I have not done. With prayer and penance, with fasting and mortification, nay with strong crying and with tears, I have sought continually, night and day, to be delivered from this death. I have read a library of evidences, but they touch me nowhere. Mary Herendean, I declare to you that, enormous as it is, it is true that I have lost the sense of God. If he is, I know it not; he is not for me."

Tears dropped slowly from Mary's eyes.

"If you mean," she said, "that you grasped this love with selfish desire, as something apart from your religion, is not that the very reason that it destroyed your faith?"

"It is not quite that," he replied; "you miss a link. It destroyed my *ideal.* This veil means my conception of the fabric of the Catholic Church, with its priesthood, its vows, its sacraments, the power of the keys, the dedicated life, the splendor and glory of its liturgy; all this was to me the sacred veil hanging before the inscrutable mystery. But I grant it is not easy to explain it. The pro-

cesses of spiritual death are strange and obscure to me. Only so much is sure, that since the hour I confessed my love, and gave over the struggle to conquer it, the whole conception of my life as a priest of God seems to lie like a thing broken at my feet, like the picture of Saint Anthony I broke to-night before I left the house."

"Suppose," said Mary, smiling a little, "I should tell you that it almost seems, if your love is true and righteous, that your mystic veil was not a divine thing; else could it have been destroyed by an honest love?"

"Ah," he said quickly, "of course you would say that. You are a Friend."

"No," she rejoined, "I am not altogether or of my own impulse a Friend. For my father's sake I preserve the old ties, and my sympathies are in many ways with Friends. I should not, however, to-day voluntarily unite with them."

"Truly? And why not?"

"Because, while I sincerely think their attempt the very bravest and loftiest one that man ever made to get straight to God without intermediary of any sort,—your veil and its broideries they would none of, and I think their conception the higher,—still, there seems to me one great flaw in their attempt."

"What then? You amaze me. I supposed you a thorough-going Friend."

"They reckoned not at all with flesh and blood. Their system is all right on the upper side, but it has little or nothing to say to the lower, the human side. They would have nothing intervene between the soul and God. Christ was more merciful. He knew what was in man better than George Fox did. But you said to me just now that you do not know God. Forgive me, but have you ever known him? Were you ever sure of him?" Mary's voice was very gentle.

Norman groaned, as with overmastering pain.

"In the beginning I suppose so. I took everything for granted. I was thinking more of the veil though, I believe, than of what lay behind. It was the beauty and poetry of it which had sway over me."

"It seems to me," said Mary, "that your veil almost fell by its own weight, being fashioned of earthly and outward elements. Where our people think little of the visible church,—too little, laying all stress on the Inner Light, the Indwelling God,—may it not be that your mistake has been in exalting overmuch the church and its rites and letting go the firm hold of the spirit on the Invisible God? Even so, a mistake like that can be retrieved,

"For wheresoe'er I stray and range,
Whate'er I do, *thou* dost not change."

"While I listen to you," answered Norman, "everything seems possible, and yet the old doubt lies at the door. Do you see the awful position in which I stand? To go on, if faith is gone, would be impossible, incredible; but to confess unfaith would be like the betrayal of a trust. Can you think what must be the fight I have fought through these weeks? But I could not, I cannot now, believe that this is the end, that faith is dead. Every thinking man must pass through some such phase of experience, more or less transient," and Norman spoke as if musing and to himself. "Every day I dream that the struggle is over and peace dawning, but each night it all comes back. I have even longed to fling myself to the other alternative, which waits for men like me. Do you remember Manning's dictum, 'It is Rome, or license of thought and will'? Either the Roman system, which stops at nothing, which welcomes without wincing the whole logic of supernaturalism, and which gives these aching brains the pillow of an infallible authority on which to rest—that or complete negation, I have sometimes felt, were the only stopping-places for a man who has

traveled the way I have come and at last opens his eyes."

"But you could not lay such bondage upon your spirit as to accept Romanism, Francis Norman?"

He smiled. "Then you prefer the agnostic's position?"

"I prefer honesty," Mary Herendean made answer, looking with endless sympathy into his face. Then falling on her knees, quite simply and as if it were the only thing to do, she prayed aloud:

"O Father of our spirits, who knowest the way that we take and who dost love thy children with love everlasting, make thyself known to thy servant. Give him the witness of thy Spirit and lead him in a plain path."

When she rose two hands were held out and hers were clasped and pressed against Francis Norman's breast. "You are my sister, my blessed sister," he said. With reverent tenderness he touched her hand with his lips and then turned from her to leave the room, hardly knowing whither he would go.

XXII

THE sound of wheels outside and the opening of the hall door brought back both to Norman and to Mary a sense of the present and its demands. Eunice came in, holding up a ruffle of her dress, and remarking excitedly rather than gayly :

"You two are getting on famously, aren't you? So glad! I have been trying my best to train Mary to look upon you as a brother, Francis Norman ; but you seem to have succeeded better than I," she went on carelessly, apparently failing to see the stress and strain which the conversation had left visibly stamped upon their faces.

"What is the matter with thy gown, Eunice?" asked Mary, approaching her.

"I caught the ruffle and tore it. Can you fasten it, Mary? It is too vexatious!" Eunice was fast unlearning the use of the Friends' forms of speech.

Mary brought her needle and thread and knelt down at Eunice's feet. Norman had gone into the hall.

"How strange!" said Mary in a low voice

to her sister; "here is a thorn caught in the ruffle and thy dress is quite damp, Eunice. Where has thee been, dear? I can't understand," and a troubled perplexity, disproportionate, it would seem, to the occasion, showed itself in Mary's face.

"I stepped out on the veranda a minute," replied Eunice coldly. "I should think there was no great difficulty in comprehending that."

Mary made no reply. She knew that only in the rose garden down by the gate could a thorn like that have been found.

Francis Norman came in, bringing a long white cape for Eunice. His face and manner had recovered their ordinary calmness.

"Isn't my new cape lovely?" exclaimed Eunice with a certain forced gayety.

"Yes, but I know a little brown shawl that I like a thousand times better. Wear that, dear, when you want to please me."

Mary had risen now, the mischief to the gown having been repaired, and watched the two as they passed out to the hall door, turning to say good-night to her as they went.

Father Norman stepped back from the threshold and said softly:

"A man cannot despair while he has the love of such a girl, Mary. Did you ever see her so beautiful?" and he hastened after Eu-

nice, watching her steps with a lover's worshiping care.

And Eunice? She took his homage rather as a matter of course, and was, indeed, a little tired and *distraite* on the way to Mrs. Knight's. The past half-hour had brought its agitation to her as well as to Norman and Mary. When she left them in the library she had, it was true, gone to the morning room, but she had not lingered there. By the casement she had hurried out to the veranda, and thence with fleet, noiseless steps through the flower-bordered garden paths.

Down to the green lane gate at the end of the rose garden she had gone to meet Ralph Kidder, not daring to fail of being there, for this was the hour and the place which he had named in a bitter, hasty note. Worse things might come upon her if, in his reckless boldness, he should make his way into the house and into Norman's presence.

It had been a tempestuous meeting. Ralph, consumed with a passion of jealousy and resentment, had poured out upon her a storm of bitter reproaches and cynical scornings, under which her head had drooped low, like a flower under the blast of the storm-wind. Then he had veered to another point and had wooed her to come back to him, to give up the lover

who was neither priest nor man, but a self-deluded Jesuit, and give herself again to his strong heart and the protection of his arms. Eunice trembled more under this attack than she had under the first; her eyes grew moist and her breath came quick and hard.

Ralph saw these tokens of the old tenderness in her and pressed his advantage hard.

"Come, dearest," he exclaimed in a passionate whisper, "come just as you are, in all this loveliness, though I hate it because you have dressed yourself for his eyes, not for mine. Let this be your bridal gear, sweetheart; cheat them all! They are only a pack of priests and women. I swear to you this night, Eunice, you love me the same as you ever did! See, you cannot deny it."

His arms were around her now and he was raining light kisses upon her forehead and eyes in spite of her helpless resistance.

"Come!" he whispered, "what can you fear with me to defend you and keep you from all their reproaches? In five minutes I can have a closed carriage here at the foot of the lane. I will put you into it, darling; I will take you to some clergyman. Ah! how he will open his eyes at my bonny bride! And then—and then, Eunice, you will have nothing more to fear or dread. I shall be your husband."

The last words were spoken low and with intense emphasis in the girl's ear. Her head rested now on his shoulder. Suddenly she sprang away as if awakening from a dream.

"Ralph, you are mad!" she cried under her breath. "What are we dreaming of? Good-bye, dear. This is the end."

Ralph Kidder had grown suddenly still and cold. He made no motion to hinder her, but stood, looking fixedly in her face under the pale starlight.

"It is not the end, Eunice," he said slowly, "not the end. But you will kiss me once for good-bye?"

"Once, Ralph, only once, and then I will pray and pray to be forgiven," and so she kissed him and fled back through the rose bushes to the house.

The drive to Mrs. Knight's was not too long for Eunice that night, but it sufficed, and she held up her head with as light a grace when she entered the dazzling drawing room as if it had not been beaten down within the hour by a storm-wind of passion.

Left alone, Mary Herendean went slowly upstairs and turned mechanically into Eunice's deserted and disordered bedroom. The dressing table was strewn with the customary lit-

ter of discarded flowers and ribbons, and out of the incongruity of this *débris* looked the face of Francis Norman from its place on a carved easel.

The eyes seemed to meet Mary's with startling directness, and she saw lurking in their depths what she had never seen before, the soul's tragedy which was going on behind that quiet, thoughtful face. Filled with unspoken yearning, Mary lifted her hand and pressed her lips fervently upon the place where he had kissed it, a storm of color dyeing her cheeks and her eyes blind with tears. In her right hand she still held unconsciously the long, sharp rose-thorn which she had just drawn from Eunice's dress.

With an impulse as sudden and spontaneous as that which went before, finding the thorn in her possession still, Mary deliberately drew its sharp point twice across the delicate skin which her lips had just pressed, inflicting two smarting incisions from which the red blood made its way.

"There," she said, "I will be a ritualist too to-night! There is my penance for that sin."

Then throwing herself at the foot of Eunice's bed, her self-control and calmness scattered to the winds, Mary Herendean gave herself up

to a flood of hot tears which those who knew her best would have thought impossible.

"Oh, the shame of it," she moaned, "and the sin and the hurt of it! How can I help him or any one in conflict, when every day I lose my own battle or win only by the cowardly trick of running away? If he knew what is in my heart how he would despise me! No, not that, but worse, how he would pity me! How cold as ice his kiss, even his voice was, and yet how kind! And he could speak plainly to me because I do not care and would not suffer! O God, have pity on me, for my heart will break! Not care?—when I tremble just to hear his voice in the room below me, and when I would give my very life if so he might find rest!"

When Eunice returned in the depth of the night she found Mary quietly waiting to receive her. She wore a trailing dressing gown of soft blue wool and her fair hair hung in a single heavy braid down her back. Eunice came in with airy step and in gay spirits.

"How sweet you look in that gown, you dear thing, only your eyes are heavy. It was too bad to keep you up so late." By this time she had reached the mirror and was studying the general effect of her reflection.

"You ought to have gone too. Positively,

Mary, I believe you would be prettier than I if you had on these things," and Eunice ran off in a merry ripple of laughter at her own conceit. "On the whole, perhaps *not* prettier, and you have *no* notion how to use your eyes, but rather magnificent, stately, don't you know? and all that. Ah, when I am Mrs. St. Cuthbert's you shall walk in silk attire with the best of them! There—don't say anything. I understand that you prefer the society of coal heavers and the dissipation of free kindergarten shows. You will have to be giddy though, once in a while, then. But, Mary, I can tell you it was fine to-night," and Eunice stepped out of the great disc of silk and gauze which had fallen around her with a gay little caper; "you should have seen the court your small sister held among the great ones of earth! I was a success, Mary. I was, upon my honor! I am simply intoxicated with being flattered like that. I never enjoyed anything so much. Of course it was mostly on Francis Norman's account, but some of it wasn't. Tom Ripley was in a state over my eyes," and Eunice in her pretty petticoats tipped her head back and made eyes at herself in the glass with naïve delight. "I like a lot of men on the whole better than one, even if that one is the incomparable Francis! But,

Mary, his manner is simply perfect. I fairly floated on it all the evening; can you understand? Perfect reserve, and yet that delicate insinuation of being charmed to plunge out of a fifth story window if it would be any object to you. It was sport to have Florence Barringer there to see it. Poor thing! She had her heart encased in patent duplex armor tonight, and she walked right up and took me without flinching, as if I had been a battery. It was really fine."

Glancing around, she found that she was alone. Mary had left the room, closing the door noiselessly behind her.

XXIII

FRANCIS NORMAN was by nature neither cautious nor hesitating. The "mean and measuring eye" of the man who schemes for his own advantage was not his. It may have belonged to the accident of a life of external ease and success, that considerations of his own position, and of what he had to gain or lose in the present crisis, did not present themselves to him. His place of power and influence was not to him for a moment a thing to be clung to or grasped at for its own sake, and to abandon this was personally the least of his trials.

The ground of his perplexity was solely whether at heart, in spite of many fears, he could still accept the system to which he stood committed, or whether it had become a dead and empty thing. If dead, it was still dear to him, and he clung, as other men have clung before him, in such crises, in an agony of desire, to the hope of finding life still left. Nevertheless, the instinctive, indubitable master-note of the man's nature was sincerity.

And now in all his concentrated anguish and

struggle, the palpitating quick of it was the old, awful truth: "None of us liveth unto himself, and no man dieth unto himself." What if in his loss of faith he should drag down with him those whose thoughts he had himself trained and molded? What if his death of hope meant that death to many others? And what if, after all, his fears and doubts were a hideous mistake, were what he had always held them in the earlier days, a messenger of Satan to buffet him? Oh, for a voice of God, unmistakable and clear! Oh, for the open vision and the answer to Mary's prayer, "Lead him in a plain path"!

The path was not plain, and his feet trod thorns at every step. Through the remaining days of that week he hardly left his room, and saw no one.

Sunday came. It was the hour of the celebration of solemn high mass at St. Cuthbert's, and the supreme moment had come in the imposing ritual. The crowds of worshipers were on their knees; the clouds of incense rose and floated high as the dim roof; voices of thrilling sweetness swept upward as the clouds of incense in the words, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!"

Then, in the silence following, a bell, deep-toned yet faint, was heard, and the white-robed

acolytes who crowded the choir, prostrated themselves anew at the sound which bade them believe that the Awful Presence, invoked by the priest, had become real in the mystic Host.

But what of the celebrant priest, who, having consecrated the host should now elevate it before the eyes of the people, and offer it as a sacrifice to the Most High God?

Instead of kneeling he had sunk prostrate on the altar steps. Was this the very ecstasy of devotion? Or was it, perchance, the exhaustion of the long fasts and vigils by which Father Norman sought to attain to the purity of the saints of God?

In another moment the priest had risen to his feet, but his face was like one smitten with death itself, white and appalling. Turning from the altar he stepped rapidly forward to the chancel rail while the ranks of choir boys and attendants stared with frightened faces, and the people held their breath.

For a little space, like Zacharias, he beckoned to them and remained speechless, but after the space of some seconds he spoke, and his voice was hoarse and strained and other than his own.

"The hour has come," he said, "of my defeat—utter—final. I have fought with wild beasts, but it has availed me nothing. I believed, even against belief, that in this awful

hour God would reveal himself, but it is not so. He hideth himself; he is as one afar off. Not again can I approach his altar, for what saith he unto me? 'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear.' "

A hush, profound and tense, had settled upon the congregation, and in awe and consternation they listened as, after a pause, he said with something like a dying man's last shadow of a smile:

"Beloved, I would very gladly have died to save you from this hour, but death for me would have been the coward's refuge. I must speak plainly and for the last time. No further portion have I in this sanctuary; I have no power to summon the Divinity to rest upon this altar; my priesthood is at an end. But I here protest before you that though my hold on God is lost to my own undoing, I have not handled the things of God deceitfully. Farewell. You who pray, pray for me." And with outspread hands he dismissed the people.

XXIV

ON Monday morning little Miss Archibald might have been seen tripping hurriedly up Minster Street in the direction of Francis Norman's house, the small silverwares of her chatelaine tinkling musically as she went. In her hands she held very carefully a bowl covered with a white napkin. Just in front of St. Cuthbert's she encountered Sister Bertha and Sister Elizabeth, who stopped her with outstretched hands.

"A tower has fallen!" groaned Sister Bertha, while with tears Sister Elizabeth added:

"A star has set! What is to become of us? Oh, dear, what can it mean?"

"Mean?" cried Miss Archibald briskly, "mean? What should it mean but that the poor, dear man has brought himself to the verge of desperation with being too religious for any use! I tell you you can have too much of a good thing—even praying."

The sisters murmured a faint protest.

"But to think, Miss Archibald," exclaimed Sister Elizabeth, "how quickly his best friends, as one would suppose, can turn against him.

The Barringers, I understand, think it was time he left St. Cuthbert's, anyway, and are not at all surprised that he has turned out just as he has."

"Even young Ripley, who fairly adored him, said last night that he 'had no further use for Father Norman,' " put in Sister Bertha.

"Fancy it! the popinjay," said Miss Archibald viciously; "he would have no use for the angel Gabriel if he appeared without his wings," and Miss Archibald's irritation increased her likeness to a paroquet noticeably.

"The trouble began," she went on, "when Father Norman became engaged. The Barringers can never get over it. Of course it was not what many of us looked for or would have wished. But I say it's none of our business, anyway, and if one thing is plainer than another it is that the man needs a wife to tend to him properly and keep him from fasting himself to death. I am convinced of one thing—the celibacy of the clergy is all a mistake! But I can't stop to talk about it. Father Norman has got to be fed up the first thing! I'm taking him some cream of celery now—just what he needs. Celery is splendid for the nerves, you know, and I must hurry along," and Miss Archibald hastened down the street with nodding crest

"She wouldn't talk like that if she knew of his letter to the bishop," said Sister Elizabeth, wiping her reddened eyelids, and the two faithful souls went their way into the church to spend an hour in prayer for Father Norman.

In the morning room of Moses Herendean's house at the same hour Eunice sat in trembling dread, waiting for Norman to enter. She had seen him coming down the garden walk, and she held in her hand a note which he had sent her the day before to forewarn her of what she must now learn more fully. She had been ill since the night of Mrs. Knight's reception and in the morning light she looked languid and wan, while her weariness was increased by a harassing cough.

There was a step in the hall and Norman entered. Eunice was surprised to see his calmness and quiet in spite of the traces of a severe ordeal. In greeting her his voice was firm and his manner freed from a certain unrest which had characterized it of late.

"This is not true," she said, her lips quivering, lifting the note in her hand; "tell me that it is all a terrible mistake. I cannot believe it. You could not look like this if you had done such a thing."

"Dear," he said, touching her hand with

soothing gentleness, "it is true that I have done this thing of which I wrote. It is true that I am no longer the rector of the church, no longer the priest. My letter to the bishop can leave him no alternative but to release me. But, love, I am still a man,"—and there was a new touch of hope and power in his voice,—"perhaps I am more of a man to-day than I ever was before," and he looked earnestly into Eunice's face as if in appeal for sympathy and response to his thought. But her eyes were cast down and she drew her hand away from his nervously.

"Poor little girl," he said, with even greater tenderness than before; "this is horribly sudden for you. I ought perhaps to have talked with you, but I could not, Eunice. I would rather spare you from ever knowing what I have been through. It would do you no good to know it," and for a moment the darkness swept over his face, altering its look painfully.

"But at least you ought to let me know what it is all about," cried Eunice with sudden spirit, casting aside the awe with which she had never ceased to regard her distinguished lover. "It is not fair to destroy all my happiness, all my life, and never tell me why."

Norman looked at her with surprise.

"Not your happiness, not your life, Eunice," he said. "Do not let us exaggerate our trouble; it is hard enough without that. While we have each other let us take courage and face the future without losing heart. The world is all before us, we are young, and at least we are free," and a thrill of suppressed feeling was in his voice.

For the first time Eunice lifted her eyes and looked fully into Norman's face. "Did you do this thing because you were tired of being a clergyman?" she asked with a certain coldness.

He looked at her in silence.

"Why *did* you do it?" she persisted, as he made no reply to her former question. "I really feel that I have a right to know."

Norman hesitated. She was still so much of a child he feared to touch her with the chill of his bitter experience.

"Oh, my child," he almost groaned, "it is hard to tell you such a thing. Eunice, my faith is gone; the worst thing which can befall a man has overtaken me," and his face seemed to grow gray and old with the words.

Eunice looked at him curiously. "Do you mean that you do not believe the creed and all that?" she asked.

"I could not repeat the Apostles' Creed

to-day if my life, nay, if *your* life, love, depended," he said under his breath.

Eunice rose from the chair by his side and took another at a little distance, something almost like impatience in her movements.

"But don't you fancy a great many men in the church, clergymen, I mean, do not believe any more than you do, but still they do not give up their office on that account? I can't quite see why you need to have given up everything in this way which is so dreadful to me if that is the only trouble."

Again Norman was silent, but he studied her face with a rising perplexity and trouble in his eyes.

"I almost wonder that you did not think of me and my feelings a little," Eunice continued, irritated by his steady glance, her courage rising. "Just picture the position I am placed in, and how the church people will talk. Very likely they will think it is all my doing, that I have undermined your faith," and Eunice was crying a little now with the acute sense of the injury which had been done her.

"Forgive me, Eunice," said Norman rising and approaching her with a gesture of protecting tenderness; "it breaks my heart to see that I have made you suffer. I have been so

selfish, so buried in my own sorrow and struggle, I do not think I have realized that it would make so much difference to you. The cause of it all is supremely hard for us both, but I thought, you know,—I was foolish enough to fancy,—that while we belonged to each other, and could bear everything together—the other things would not make so much difference to you."

"Not make a difference to me," she exclaimed, looking up passionately through her tears, "whether I am engaged to a man whom everybody honors—yes, worships—or to a minister who has deserted the church, who has no standing anywhere? You certainly could not think of living in Coalport after this!" she added pointedly, her excitement overriding all her reverence for him and her natural delicacy of feeling.

"Eunice," Norman said, drawing back from her and clenching his hands hard together, "I do not know you. I do not understand," and an unspeakable weariness came over his face. Involuntarily his thought turned to Mary Herendean, with the wish that she would come to his relief and take this strange, perplexing tangle into her steady hands.

"I think you are right," said Eunice, drying her eyes and rising; "I do not think you

do understand me, nor I you. I feel that I have been very strangely treated. You seem to have left me out of consideration altogether."

"But, Eunice," cried Norman, goaded to indignation at last, and asserting himself with something like severity, "stop and think what you are saying! Could I have crowded down my conviction, denied what I knew to be true, and forced myself to a deceitful and dissembling course of action, in order that you might marry me as a man of influence, instead of, as you delicately suggest, a discredited minister?"

"You put it, Francis Norman, in the worst possible way," she exclaimed; "but, even so, I say yes! If you really loved me I think you would have put me first; you would have gone on as you were rather than involve me in this frightful humiliation."

Norman had grown white to the lips and the light in his eyes was stern and terrible.

"Then I do not love you," he said in a low voice, in contrast to hers, which was high with excitement, "if that is your conception of love."

Eunice's eyes fell before his. She looked white and spent; her frame shook with renewed coughing and her tears began to flow again, but there was no softening in Norman's face.

"If love means the sacrifice of honor and truth, I do not love you, Eunice, and I will go my way without you," he said sadly.

"It is not too late," she murmured, overawed by Norman's personal power as she had never been before, so that she trembled before him, and yet clinging with soft obstinacy to her own will and way; "you could make it all right yet, if you would."

"How so?" he asked briefly.

"By writing to the bishop again and saying you were willing to reconsider, and all that. You could at least go on for a time and hope for better things, and they might come, you know," she added timidly.

"You ask what is impossible, Eunice. I have hoped long and it has been in vain," and he looked at her with the great and sore amazement which had taken possession of him early in the interview. "There is only one straight course for a man in my place, if he will not lose the last thing left to him, his manhood. I supposed that was so plain you could not fail to see it."

"You are going?" she asked weakly, longing to throw herself into his arms and be forgiven.

"Yes I must," he said. "I will come again when we are both calmer and we will

hope there may be better cheer. Good-bye," and Norman left the room and the house.

When he reached his own door, walking rapidly and almost like one dazed through streets in which he saw nothing, an impish-faced newsboy ran up the steps after him and with a cunning feint of innocence said :

"Say, mister, buy a paper, won't yer? Last edition to-night," and he held out a sheet, smelling of fresh printer's ink, before Norman's eyes, as he stood with his key in the door.

Norman shook his head, but his glance mechanically, unavoidably, took in a heavily-printed headline held uppermost : "*Apostate from the Faith! An Unfrocked Priest! Coalport's Latest Sensation!*"

For a moment the man grew dizzy and leaned against the door for support, but the gesture with which he dismissed the boy was convincing, and he entered the house with a steady step, albeit in his face was something like the bitterness of death.

When the newsboy reached the sidewalk he encountered, drawn up in line of battle, another urchin of his own social station, who stood before him with fists squared and breath hot with rage. He had evidently been a witness of the small scene just enacted.

"Lay down them papers now and come on!" he cried between his set teeth, "Yer've got to fight me!"

It was Joey Ahern.

XXV

EUNICE, white and trembling, had sunk into an arm-chair, and it was thus that Mary, entering the room a little later, found her.

Mary had met Francis Norman in the hall. He had gone past her without speaking, and she had seen his face.

"Eunice!" she cried, "what is it that has happened?"

"I am not quite sure," replied Eunice coldly; "I rather think though that I have broken my engagement."

Mary sat down beside her sister and took her little, trembling hands into her own. Her face was very grave.

"Tell me, dear, what thee means," she said, with motherlike gentleness.

In rapid, broken, incomplete sentences, Eunice poured forth her story of Norman's action on Sunday, and of her interview with him just now concluded. Her sense of wounded feeling and resentment grew with every word. Shame, disappointment, chagrin, were the dominant notes in her recital; vehement regret,

not for her lover's loss of faith, but for his loss of prestige.

As she listened, a slow wonder at the naïve worldliness of Eunice arose in Mary's mind as it had in Norman's, only with this difference: the sister knew better than the lover what to expect.

"Eunice," she asked, "does thee realize the terrible suffering which Francis Norman has undergone before he could take a step like this?"

"I suppose it has been hard for him," replied Eunice half reluctantly.

"Hard! Oh, my dear, while thee was resting in the morning room that evening before you went to Mrs. Knight's, he talked with me about the doubts which he was fighting, and my heart never ached so for any man in my life."

"He has talked with thee then about this?" asked Eunice with a look of keen inquiry in her sister's face. "He was careful to deceive me to the last possible moment."

"Do not say 'deceive,' Eunice; thee knows it is no word to use of Francis Norman. He told me that he could not bear to let the blight of his great trouble come upon thee. It was because we were so little to each other that he could talk to me."

Eunice's eyes fell again with weary indifference.

"Dear little sister," Mary continued, commanding her voice which trembled somewhat in spite of her will, "I almost wonder if, being so near him and all that, thee can see, as an outsider, a stranger almost, can, the real greatness of Francis Norman's spirit."

Eunice raised her eyes in languid wonder, and looked at Mary.

"I supposed thee and father thought he was an utterly deluded man. Thee has certainly shown plainly enough what thee thought of his opinions."

"Yes," Mary said, blushing deeply with the remembrance of her plainness of speech on one occasion, "I know I have. But, Eunice, even if we cannot feel that he thinks rightly in every respect, we must not fail to see how nobly, how manfully, how self-denyingly, he has stood for what he thought right."

"Oh, I don't know," said Eunice; "his views are rather fashionable just at present."

"But he has sought no gain or good or prominence, Una, from that fact. Have we not known of his solitary, devoted life, how he who is through and through the artist and the poet, has put from him all that ministered to these tastes? how he has given himself with-

out reserve to the service of the poorest and humblest?"

"I never expected, Mary," said Eunice half impatiently, "to hear thee defending Francis Norman for those monkish ideas. I thought Friends held all such things to be popish vanities."

"And if I do think him mistaken,—as I do, even as I think Friends mistaken, in putting away all the beauty of music and art and joyousness—still it was a mistake high and pure in its source, and nobler than other men's complacent conformities."

Eunice looked at her sister steadily.

"Dear, it seems strange I know, for me to be saying all this to thee, for thee knows him so much more truly and inwardly, and yet I cannot help it. His looks to-day, and thine, frighten me. I fear thee has in some way failed of grasping the greatness that belongs to him even in his downfall."

Eunice's lip trembled.

"Think, dear," Mary continued, her face full of a fine and self-forgetting ardor, "of how, if he had been a smaller man, he would have been influenced at a crisis like this by a thousand small personal motives to compromise and go on with some perilous shift and avoid this humiliation for thy sake and for his own."

"I don't think he ever thought of me at all," murmured Eunice crying softly; "he is away off from me. I don't understand such great people, and I'm sure they're very uncomfortable. Just think what the Barringers will say, and how everything is spoiled just when I thought it would be so lovely. I am sure if I had known that this was the way he was coming out, I would never have——" the word "sacrificed" was on Eunice's lips, but she bethought herself just in time and stopped abruptly.

"Eunice!" Mary's voice had a startling ring.

Eunice looked up, with a sob under her breath.

"Thee cannot mean to let me think that thee has been dealing untruly with a man like Francis Norman!"

Eunice turned away her head, and answered nothing.

"Child," said Mary, low and urgently, "does thee know what it is—a strong man's strong nature with all its heights and depths? Has it entered into thy heart to conceive what love means to such a man, pure and great and high-minded; loving not with fitful, frivolous self-seeking, but as men love God, sternly and simply? O Eunice, the greatest gift a woman

can have has been put into thy hands," and all the lofty earnestness of Mary Herendean's nature looked from her sweet eyes.

"Oh, dear me," Eunice sighed plaintively, "everybody is in such a state! I don't see why thee should take it to heart so."

"Forgive me, Una," Mary said gently, "I am afraid I said more than I ought; but there is one thing that thee must not forget, dear; Francis Norman has had the greatest loss a man can have if he has lost his faith in God."

"Oh, what a dreadful thing to talk about!" said Eunice shivering.

"Yes, but if thee can help him to win back his faith think what thee has to give thee courage and make thee glad."

Eunice shook her head slowly.

"Yes, little sister, I know what I said just now was not true. Thee does love Francis Norman and will keep thy plighted faith to him loyally and righteously."

There was a little tremor of Eunice's eyelids.

"And now I do believe that, very slowly perhaps but certainly, thee can lead him back to his lost faith, and so through thy love he can become a far greater man than he ever could have been without this fearful awakening. He is in a sharp struggle now. He is casting

off the superfluous and useless weights with which his faith was encumbered," Mary went on thoughtfully, "and he is not yet at the end. What if for the time all should seem to go down in the wreck?—there will come a day of clearness and calm after the tempest and the earthquake when I believe his spirit will awaken to hear the still small voice, to see that which is Invisible, and he will be led into the light again."

Mary's face grew radiant with the uplift of her thought.

"And thy part in it, love," she cried tenderly, bending to kiss Eunice on her forehead, "is to wait quietly thy time and then to help him to *see*. Pure in heart is my little sister, and blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God, and, seeing, they may make others see. Look, Una, is it not happiness to have this to do for him?" and there was a pathos in Mary's voice as she spoke which touched her sister strangely. Nevertheless, Eunice could not measure up to Mary's mood.

"That sounds very lovely, Mary," she replied with chilling unresponsiveness, "and I am sure thee could do it thyself and I wish thee had the chance. It would suit thee much better than it does me. I never supposed I should have to try to convert a minister. I

should think it was their business to stay converted themselves and convert other people."

Mary smiled a little.

"If Francis Norman had just kept his doubts to himself he would have forgotten all about them after a while as the rest of us do. Oh, dear, I am so tired of everything! I wish I had never seen or heard of St. Cuthbert's and all that belongs to it. Why couldn't they have let me alone?" and with this outburst of childish, petulant resentment Eunice rose from her chair and went upstairs, looking thoroughly dejected and miserable.

Mary sat still in her place looking after Eunice as she departed, lost in thought.

"Of what can any woman be made," she mused, "who can hold Francis Norman's love in her listless hands, as uncertain whether it is a thing to be kept or to be thrown away? Is she more or less than human? How is it that she can think and speak of herself, that she can coldly upbraid him in a day like this? that she can let him go back to his desolate house uncomforted?" And with this thought a great wave of compassion overbore every other thought in Mary's breast and her whole soul melted in pity of the lonely man, fighting his mortal combat single-handed and alone, no man and no woman regarding.

"And I could go to him myself," her heart cried, "and I would, for I have the right; he called me his sister, and I would stand by his side this very hour and tell him that, whatever men say, I know that he is true and upright in heart; that he would not have betrayed the trust men placed in him save that the highest honor bade him; that I know the meaning of his deep anguish, and that God knows and pities! Ah, would I not do this? But I cannot, for oh,—Father pity me,—I love him —I who have no right—with this unmerciful, aching love, and this is my punishment, that I may not trust myself to speak. *O God, make Eunice Herendean a woman.*" And Mary spoke these last words aloud in her stress, rising and stretching out her clasped hands with a strong gesture of appeal.

XXVI

IT was past ten o'clock of that same evening, and Mary Herendean left Eunice's bedroom and started to go to her own, with a clouded face. She had made her sister comfortable for the night and Eunice had declared that she was going directly to sleep and wanted nothing but to be left alone, but she had seemed weak and feverish and Mary felt ill at ease on her account.

It would have been impossible to Mary Herendean to regard Eunice without tenderness. Even now, seeing her slight, fleeting nature breaking down utterly under the present sharp testing, she still believed that a better womanhood was latent in the child, to be shown forth when touched by the right influence.

"Oh, to be wise," she cried to herself, "to see the way to call her out of this littleness, to find the reality of her nature, instead of its surface!"

Moses Herendean stood at the door of his room as Mary came through the hall. He had seen the evening paper, and had thrown it into the fire.

"This is true, daughter, that we hear of Francis Norman?" he asked, detaining her.

Mary nodded her head, too faint at heart to speak.

"This is a day of close proving for him," said the old man quietly, "a day of clouds and thick darkness; but it is a day which must needs come if I have rightly read the man."

Mary looked at her father with a sudden dawning of light in her eyes. He had the clear vision; he would understand.

"Francis Norman has interested me exceedingly," he continued; "I have seen that he was in a false position from which a break, sudden or gradual, must inevitably come. Some men can live forever on the husks of things, but he cannot. He has a nature dreamy and poetic perhaps, and so peculiarly open to a certain form of delusion, but I believe him to be absolutely sincere."

"I am sure that is true," Mary murmured.

"Some men have a kind of external sincerity, something like a garment which they can put off and on, but in him it is the tissue and fibre of his will. He is *of the truth.* 'Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.' We must all stand by him earnestly now, Mary. I trust that Eunice may bring him good comfort and be to him as a light in a dark place."

Mary did not reply, but in silence kissed her father good-night.

Alone in her room, meanwhile, Eunice lay with wide-open eyes, struggling with the cough which would call Mary back to her if she heard it, struggling harder with a sudden impulse which had arisen within her. At last she sat up restlessly in bed, turned on the light just above her head, and for a moment seemed lost in thought, her face white and piteous, clouded with perplexity.

Then suddenly, as if a definite conclusion had been reached, she sprang to the floor with nervous quickness, ran barefooted to her desk, gathered writing materials from it, and then returned, chilled from head to foot. For a moment she lay huddled in a little shivering heap, but soon she was warm and relieved, and drawing around her shoulders a little brown shawl which lay on the bed, with a curiously cold smile, she began to write with eager, tremulous haste.

The letter written, sealed, and ready, Eunice sat meditating on some plan for its immediate posting. Glancing at her clock she found it half-past ten already; with eleven all chance for to-night would be over. Plainly there was no one in the house to whom she could entrust the care of mailing this letter, for Mary must

never know that it had been written. It must go to-night, and it was only to step down to the corner of the lane; the night was fine; she really was not sick at all, just tired with all this worry, and of course she did take a little cold down in the rose garden that night; yes, her mind was made up.

With noiseless motions Eunice rose and dressed, wrapped herself in a heavy cloak, turned down her light, and softly made her way to the stairs in the rear of the house, avoiding that part of the hall into which Mary's room opened. A moment later she had opened the servants' door into the garden, and with light, winged steps, she sped down the path between the flower beds, faint with sweet odors of May lilies, to the green lane gate among the rose bushes. There was a big round moon in a white sky above her, with a weak halo rimming it; the moon seemed to stare at Eunice uncomfortably. When she pushed open the gate and stepped through, the lane looked dark and fearsome, and her hands shook so that she nearly dropped her letter, but with nerve, rather than with courage, she kept on, and ran all the way to the corner, where she slipped the letter into the lamp-post box. Some men strolling by singing, stared at her rudely, and she grew faint with fear, but they did not

speak, and she ran back safely to the house by the way she had come, crept up the stairs, and found with unspeakable relief that her absence had not been discovered.

"A bad quarter of an hour, to be sure," she said to herself, as she turned out her light and laid her head again upon the pillow, all her pulses beating it seemed like great engines; "but it may be worth it all. There is one person left yet, I guess, to pity this poor little girl, if only he can forgive me."

XXVII

TWO days later, in a drenching spring rain, Francis Norman entered the low iron front gate at the Willow Street house once more and hurried down the walk strewn with wet leaves between the rows of drowned tulips. A doctor's carriage was being driven out by the side entrance at the same moment, and while he waited on the porch longer than usual the postman came down the path behind him and with a word of apology handed him a letter to be delivered within. The letter was addressed to Eunice in a man's hand and was postmarked New York. These points, however, Francis Norman did not note, and handed the letter to the housemaid as he went in, saying casually he believed it was for Miss Eunice and would she ask her if he might see her for a short time at once.

The maid ran upstairs and Norman entered the library, where he found Moses Herendean reading alone.

"Eunice is not ill, I trust?" he asked anxiously after he had greeted the old man.

"Yes, I regret to say," replied Moses Herendean, "that she is seized with what threatens to prove a severe illness. The doctor this morning speaks of pneumonia," and the father's face was troubled in spite of its serious composure.

While they were discussing her condition Eunice in her room upstairs lay with lustreless eyes and pale, parted lips, through which her hot breath came over-fast. Mary was absent from the room preparing remedies which the doctor had directed.

"Mr. Norman has come, Miss Eunice," said the maid, coming to the bedside with the letter in her hand; "he wants to see you most especial, if he can, and he sends you this letter, miss, though perhaps it was the postman gave it to him."

Eunice took the letter with eager haste from the maid's hand.

"How very obliging of him," she said in a weak, hoarse voice and with a faintly ironical smile as she saw the handwriting, while a rosy flush covered her face and neck, which had been unnaturally white before.

The maid stood waiting, but Eunice, tearing open the envelope, which fell on the carpet, opened the letter and glanced at the first words. At sight of them a sudden brightness came

into her eyes and seemed to transform her face. She leaned back upon the pillow, under which she thrust the letter.

"Maybe it ain't good for you, Miss Eunice, to get that excited like," murmured the maid.

"That's all right, Betty," she said weakly. "Tell my sister to come here as soon as she can."

In a moment Mary was at the bedside, but even as she approached she stooped and picked up the torn envelope which had fallen from Eunice's hand. A glance at it sent a vivid flush to Mary's cheeks.

"Why, Eunice," she cried, "this is Ralph's writing! How can he dare to write to thee after father has forbidden him ever to do so again?"

"No matter, Mary; don't worry me about it now when you see how sick I am. Francis Norman is downstairs and you will have to see him. I certainly can't."

There was a brief but earnest argument between the sisters, in which Eunice held her ground, and then Mary hastened down to the hall below. Norman, who had been intently listening for a step, met her at the foot of the stairs.

"What does she say?" he asked with piercing anxiety in his eyes.

"She cannot see you," was Mary's answer.

"No. I was sure it would not be best after your father told me of her condition. Is it all my doing, Mary? I feel almost as if I had killed the sweet child with my own hand. I did not dream she was ill at all when I was here. It accounts for so much, and I must have been a savage to speak as I did to her."

Mary looked down, sorely troubled. "Do not feel so," she said gently. "I cannot think it is what you did altogether, but yesterday she grew worse very suddenly and we cannot comprehend the cause. She certainly did not seem really ill the day you saw her. I do not understand," and Mary shook her head sadly; "but I cannot leave her a moment."

"Did she send me any message?" Norman asked almost pleadingly.

"Yes, that is the hardest of all," said Mary. Tears were in her eyes and she did not lift them to Norman's face. "She says you must not expect to see her. She feels that the engagement has been a mistake and she wants you to release her. She will return your letters." Mary repeated the brief sentences with a manner cold through the severity of the restraint she was laying upon herself, and with the last words she held out her hand and gave something into his.

"What is this?" he cried sharply, his face grim and stern with pain. It was the ring he had given Eunice.

"Please spare me that," he said with forced calmness, replacing it in her hand; "throw it away, if you will, for me. The letters would better be burned," he added deliberately. "I shall not be in Coalport to receive them."

"Where are you going—when?" faltered Mary.

"This week, somewhere,—I hardly know where,—but I will send an address. I shall wait until you let me know that—she is better, and then, when there is no chance that I could be needed, I shall go as far forth as I can, the farther the better; the world is wide. I want to drop out of sight completely. Why should I not? Will you say good-bye? Can you forgive me?"

Mary could not speak, but she held out her hand. He clasped it for an instant and hurried from the house.

XXVIII

FRANCIS Norman spent the two succeeding days in writing all letters and making all preparations necessary to a prolonged and indefinite absence. The care of church and parish could be left in his assistant's hands, and from no point of view was it desirable for the sake of the church that he should linger in Coalport. His housekeeper and servants he dismissed out of hand and saw them depart, amazed but well pleased with a liberal advance of wages.

The hardest thing he had to do, and yet a task which he would not spare himself, was to pay a few visits to those who had stood nearest to him in the church and to whom he was under the obligation of this personal attention. It was an experience even harder than he had anticipated; but he was inured to self-discipline, and he went through it without faltering.

Miss Archibald, though plainly extremely shocked at his course, was still loyal and sympathetic, and at pains to smooth his pathway so far as lay in her power. She was confident that he would get all over this little episode

and come back to them by and by just as dear and good as ever. They could never have a rector who could take his place, and do among them such a work as he had done.

"Your only fault, Father Norman," she assured him, amid plentiful tears, as she said good-bye, "is that you're *too* good, *too* spiritual, and take things harder than you need to."

In the various visits which followed, Norman met sometimes the coldness that he expected, sometimes the reproaches, and hardest of all, the pity of those accustomed to revere and honor him.

His last call was at Mrs. Barringer's. Miss Barringer alone of the family was at home. When Norman's card was brought to her in her room she looked at it with a sharp compression of the lips and told the maid to say that she was engaged. Then, with a sudden impulse, she ran and caught the maid at the head of the stairs, and bade her tell Mr. Norman that she would see him. Then she paused a little space, looking at herself attentively in the glass. She was dressed for a dinner and looked, as she always looked, her best in sumptuous attire. There was untroubled repose in her face, and the quietness of assurance undisturbed in the very way she held herself. She knew this and she guessed

what its effect might be upon the tossed and troubled spirit of Francis Norman. Very well, let it have its effect. This man had committed the crime of walking with unseeing eyes past his highest opportunity. Failing to see that the royal flower had swung to the reach of his hand, he had stooped to gather and lay on his heart instead an insignificant, pale wild flower. The man was bent, it seemed, on his own humiliation. Let him see then, once more, the height from which he had fallen.

It was thus in all her stately beauty, with a manner perfect to her conception of the occasion, cold and quiet, yet not ungracious, that Florence Barringer presented herself before Norman to receive his final adieu.

He had always admired her, had always been impressed and interested by the quality and poise of her character, and a faint smile of pleasure passed over his face as he advanced to greet her now, with his unchanged, high-bred grace.

Florence Barringer had keen perceptions. She might have resisted the influence of his personal regard, but she saw that in his face which mastered her womanhood and laid low the defenses of pride and coldness behind which she had thought to meet him. For

Norman bore in his face the stamp of the decisive conflict he was waging, which, while it seamed and marred his visage with deep and painful lines, yet produced in it a power which Florence Barringer had never seen there before, the greatness of a real contest, with real and not imagined forces. On the instant she felt that she had come to him as a child might bring its pettiness to the notice of a mighty man absorbed in mighty things. When they were seated and she lifted her eyes to meet his look, Francis Norman saw in them an awe which he never had dreamed of meeting there, and she spoke and moved in his presence with a humility and hesitation foreign to herself.

There was little, however, that could be put into speech between them. Besides the afternoon was far advanced and Norman's time was short. He was to leave Coalport in a few hours. He rose to go. At the moment, Mr. Barringer had come into the hall, and now presented himself at the door.

"Ah! Norman," he said coolly, "how do you do? Just going, eh? Well, I suppose we shall have to say good-bye to you? Understand you're off for Europe for a long tour?"

Norman assented.

"That's a good scheme. You look tired

out, and you have stuck pretty close to business, I guess. A man gets morbid if he doesn't have a let-up now and then."

Norman bent his head slightly and stood thus without reply.

"You strained things just a little too hard, I guess, down there, and the bow snapped at last. Well, you're a lucky fellow to be able to take yourself off when you please. I can't leave my business in that way."

Florence Barringer attempted to speak, but her father did not notice her and continued to address Norman.

"You'll turn your attention to art now, won't you?" he asked carelessly. "I always thought your tastes were in that direction. Well, that's all right. All I say is that if you'd been a poor man, with a wife and children, you'd have had to swallow down your scruples and stick to your work. It isn't every man who can afford to indulge his speculations quite to this extent."

Norman bowed with fine, forbearing courtesy and moved toward the door.

"By the way, you may be interested," Mr. Barringer added. "I met the bishop in New York this morning, and he told me he had just the man for St. Cuthbert's—could put his hand right on him."

"I am exceedingly relieved to hear this, Mr. Barringer," said Norman gently. "It is what I most desired," and with a few words he parted from father and daughter.

It had been a week of bad weather, and the rain had set in again, Norman found, when he came out again into the street, and a gusty wind was blowing. At the street corner he met Tom Ripley, who passed him with civil but brief salutation. Tom knew that he was about leaving town, for Norman had written him to that effect and suggested his coming to see him at his house. Ripley had not, however, acted upon the suggestion.

"Tom is tenacious of his theology," Norman said to himself, smiling a little cynically, hurt unreasonably by the young fellow's defection. "I should be loth, indeed, to compromise his orthodoxy, and I suppose I am rather a dangerous person now."

As he went on, buffeted by the wind, the rain beating against his unprotected face, he walked in bitterness of spirit to the rhythm of a haunting verse which would not leave him :

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,
A rope cuts both my wrists behind ;
And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,
For they fling, whoever has a mind,
Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

In the empty, echoing house in Minster Street, Norman did not betake himself as formerly to his narrow, cell-like apartment upstairs. It was closely locked and left. He went into the great library beyond the drawing room. The room was chilly and close and dark already. The fires had gone out in the house, and there was no one within its walls to minister to his needs. Wet and shivering, with such fuel as he could lay his hands on, for he had lived in total ignorance of the domestic matters of his house, he tried to light a fire in the empty grate. The gloomy silence of the place, with its heavy furnishings and stiff unusedness, was overpowering. The fire flickered up for a moment, then smoked and died out.

"No fire on my hearth to-night," thought Norman, and went to the upper regions to make ready for his journey.

XXIX

IT was seven o'clock and growing dark when Francis Norman, clad in an ordinary rough tweed traveling suit, stood on his doorstep and looked out into the storm which had increased in violence.

"Life is over," he said to himself. "Now for existence! It is perhaps a trifle grim to have no one to see me off, but it is all of a color."

He set his small, leather bag on the tiled floor of the vestibule, and with some deliberation locked and double locked the heavy front door, dropping the key into his pocket.

"Who shall unlock this door again?" he asked himself, "and when?"

He turned to descend the steps, and was aware for the first time of the small figure of a boy in rain-sodden garments, clinging to the rail, on the lower step. A second glance and he recognized Joey Ahern.

"Why, Joey," he said, holding out his hand with a smile to the little fellow; "what are you doing here in the rain? Hurry home to your mother."

"No, sir, Father Norman, I ain't goin' home; I'm goin' along with you," and a moisture of a different species from the rain which dripped from his cap appeared in Joey's light, round eyes.

By this time Norman was walking rapidly down the street, Joey following hard after him.

"I'll keep close to yer heels, Father Norman, jes' like ye told me to that night when ye went home with the lady."

There was no reply. On they went, Norman a step or two in advance.

"Please, sir, may I carry yer bag?"

"No, Joey. Here's a quarter, my boy. Now run home, as I tell you."

"I don't want no quarter," said Joey hotly; "that ain't wat I'm after. You'd ought ter know that wa'n't it."

"You came simply as a friend, didn't you, Joey, to see me off?" asked Norman gravely. "Now that was kind. But how did you know I was going away?"

"The cook told me mother, sir. Sure, she's second cousin to me uncle's wife, and she said as how yer was fer shuttin' up the house, and I thought mebbe yer was kinder down on yer luck, and I'd like to have yer know I feel awful bad," and Joey sniffled violently.

"Walk by my side, Joey," said Norman, waiting a moment. "It is only when I am escorting young ladies that I wish you to keep at my heels. And so you feel sorry that I am going away? I rather like that notion, Joey. It seems to suit me particularly well to have you care about it. We always were pretty good friends, don't you think so? But now here is the car I'm going to take, and I'll give you five cents to take the other car yonder down to your house. You must not try to walk to the mines to-night; you would be carried off in the torrents." Then looking at the miserable, water-soaked and tearful little fellow, he added whimsically: "The flood-gates have been loosed already sufficiently, haven't they? I almost feel like tears myself. However, Joey, listen to what I have to say. Miss Mary Herendean, whom you have seen sometimes down at the settlement—Miss Mary, remember, will have some money which I shall arrange to leave with her for your mother, for coal and rent and things, you know. I will see that she understands that it is to be paid the first of every month. You will go for it yourself, Joey, will you? And she will perhaps look after you a little. Good-bye!" and Norman swung himself on the passing car.

As he approached the station, he was sur-

prised to see Moses Herendean's family chariot, with its peculiar black-beetle outline and its staid old horse, driven up by the venerable Simeon with something approaching rapidity. As he drew near, Mary Herendean alighted from the carriage and met Norman face to face just as he stopped under the dripping station roof.

"Oh, I have met you!" she exclaimed, with joyful surprise, and held out both hands, too full of her thought of him to remember that she loved him—to remember herself at all. There was a rich glow in her cheeks, her fair hair was flurried by the wind into a soft cloud on her forehead, and her face was eager and beautiful. "I came, thinking you might be leaving by the express," she went on, speaking rapidly.

They both remained standing in the shadow of the carriage, while the ancient Simeon watched his dripping horse with a gravely reproachful countenance.

"Well?" Norman asked, looking earnestly into her face.

"There are two things you ought to know, Francis Norman," Mary began, "before you leave Coalport. One is, that Eunice is undoubtedly better, and we think will escape the worst we feared; and the other—" here a shade

of embarrassment crossed Mary's face, "the other is this: that you must never blame yourself for this illness. It is not you who have caused it. I know now that it has come from a wholly different cause, from Eunice's own imprudence. She has told me what makes many things clear. It is not right that you should bear too heavy a load," and her eyes darkened with indignant protest and a superb sternness was on her lips, which carried Norman's thought back with a flash to one certain hour in the parish house of St. Cuthbert's.

"You are kind, Mary," he replied thoughtfully. "It is bitter to feel that I have done wrong to many who have trusted me, but most bitter to have hurt her. But I know by this that you forgive me?"

"Yes."

"And you will carry out a little work I want to leave with you?" he asked. "I expected to send you back a note," and he proceeded to place the Ahern family in her charge. When this was arranged, it was time for him to go.

"We shall not hear from you?" Mary asked, as he helped her into the carriage.

"No, I cannot look forward now to writing to any one. But will you promise me one thing? When it is the tenth of May again,

will you send me a letter, and tell me—all—you can—of *her*—of you all? I will wait till then. I will call for the letter at this address, wherever I may be between now and then," and Norman wrote on his card a street and number in London and placed it in her hand.

Mary bent her head in agreement; he closed the carriage door; for one instant their eyes said good-bye, and then he was gone, and Simeon turned his horse's head in the direction of Willow Street.

XXX

IT was midsummer, a year, and months besides, from the time of Francis Norman's departure from Coalport, when the first letter from him was received in the house on Willow Street and read by Mary Herendean, to whom it was addressed, as she sat alone in the quiet library with her father. Eunice was no longer with them.

The letter was dated in a little village on the coast of North Devon, in England, and it said:

More than once I have been almost ready to write to you, but one thing has held me back—I had nothing good to tell you. To-day it is different; something has been given me off here in these wild moors which I did not find though I searched for it half the world over.

A week ago I struck off on foot and quite alone into the very heart of this Devonshire wilderness. The day was not more beautiful than other days, I think the sky was rather frowning when I started. It was noon when I found myself, I knew not where, but in a valley with great hills covered by pathless stretches of purple moor rising about me in every direction. No human being was in sight, nor trace nor sign of any. There were no trees, no varied, suggestive landscape, but as I climbed one hill and looked about in every direction, still there stretched the wild, unbroken moor.

How can I tell you what followed? There was nothing to intervene, nothing to suggest, no elements anywhere but the simplest—the naked earth, the sober gray sky, and my soul, free and unfettered. It was then, in that moment, that looking up, and looking within, and looking around me, by an intuition mighty, convincing, never to be gainsaid, *I knew God, even the Father.* I looked up, and it was as if I looked into the face of God, and as if the earth beneath me were an almighty arm. Tears rained from my eyes. I called as if in answer to an audible voice, "*I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.*"

Can you ever dream what that stupendous fact meant to me, starved, homeless, godless, through this year of wandering, haunted in my best estate by those malignant whispers of which you know?

I said those words again and again, and to you, fed long on "boundless hopes" and faith unclouded, they cannot come with the supreme joy which they meant to me. *I believe*, Mary Herendean—thank God—in *God*, and not so only, but in God the *Father*, the same who made earth and heaven! love and power absolute.

Am I poor? Am I a wanderer, a man without a country, despised, forgotten? Am I the man who lost a believing heart, a woman's love, the confidence and honor of his fellow-men? Am I that wretched, hapless creature? I know it not. I feel it not. Though I lost everything, something has now been given to me which was never mine before, *I know God.*

> I work in freedom wild,
> But work as plays a little child,
> Sure of the Father, Self, and Love alone.

For me I ask no more; but I know what you will say; can I not go on and repeat the clause which fol-

lows this mighty assertion? No, not yet. That may follow for me, but my time for it has not yet fully come. For the present I am satisfied.

Do not think I have not longed for this. I sought Him in the land of his birth, in the garden of his agony, on the mount of his death, but I found him not. I sought him in the wonderful paintings of the south, the kingly child in his mother's arms, but I saw a human child. With yearning unutterable I sought him in that profoundest and most pathetic picture ever painted of him, Rembrandt's "Supper at Emmaus." For hours I have stood before it. I would have copied it, line by line, I loved it so, but I dared not, *because I did not believe.* I felt that here was the innermost conception and showing forth of the man Christ Jesus who had tasted death, and tasted it for every man; I was moved, but only as I have been moved too often by a beautiful symbol. I could not accept it as bare truth.

I have dealt in symbols too long, Mary. My spiritual sense is benumbed by them. The iteration of them had become terrible. You were too wise, I remember, to wonder greatly that I lost the sight of God in the heavy folds of the veil men have fashioned to hang before his face. Why do men?—why did I?—seek to make a mystery of what God would have as clear as his sunshine, his air, his crystal sea?

Never have I reacted as now from the modern sacerdotal scheme of Christendom. If God indeed *has* sent his son, a sacrificial altar and a sacrificing, intermediating priesthood to-day are an anachronism, an incredible confusion of thought—not medievalism merely, but dead Judaism, which men seek to graft on a living tree. And when I consider the theory of an extrinsic, transmitted claim which I once heedlessly

accepted, I feel with Arnold that I can hardly treat it gravely; "there is something so monstrously profane," as he says, "in making our heavenly inheritance like an earthly estate, to which our pedigree is our title." And the appalling thought of all is that underlying all these modern ecclesiastical pretensions and rites is the old, dark persistence of the human soul toward idolatry, the magnifying of the symbol, the fatal emphasis on the external. Priesthood bars the way to the direct approach to God. You Friends, at least, are not afraid to be left alone with God and your own souls. Thereby you have escaped divers lusts which war against us.

No, whatever comes in the future,—and I am not in haste, believing that "my own shall come to me,"—my plan of life can never take the old shape. That sought distinction from my kind, separateness, exclusiveness. To-day my most ardent desire is to be, not the priest, but fully and as far as God shall give me grace, to be a man, a man sent of God to serve his fellows.

My passion is for complete oneness with my fellowmen; to bear their burdens with them as *one of them*, not as belonging to a different class. Distinctions and barriers of dress and name and speech I will none of. If we ritualists were wrong, forgive me, you Friends are wrong here also. There is a higher simplicity, a more interior humility. You alone, of all men and women I have known, possess it. The perfect manifestation of it is embodied in the conception of the incarnation, the Christ, coming not as a priest nor as a prince, but as a Man of Sorrows, the friend of publicans and sinners.

But I fear to weary you with the new hopes and purposes which are stirring within me.

Your letter reached me in May. I cannot say that Eunice's secret marriage and hasty departure were an absolute surprise to me. I confess I had thought of this marriage as being among the possibilities. I cannot help hoping that your own and your father's estimate of the young man's character may be mistaken, at least that his future may redeem his past. I believe that he was not only Eunice's first love, but that in spite of all that has occurred she has really never loved but once. I had hoped and fully believed otherwise, but I think now that her own heart was deceived, and that in trying to give this man up she attempted what was beyond her strength to perform.

In a way you will see that there is reconcilement to me in this belief, for it shows me that I should not have made her happy and there is less for me to regret.

Let us be of good hope. It is love that never faileth that is greater than evil.

XXXI

ON Christmas Eve an express train was approaching Coalport. The Reverend James Hope was a passenger on this train and sat deeply absorbed in a magazine article in his place in the car when he became aware that some one was standing just before him, regarding him closely.

Looking up, he saw a tall figure of rather sturdy and muscular build, with the dress and outline in general of a traveled Englishman. The bearded face which bent over him with a frank, eager smile, was deeply bronzed and full of alert vigor. Hope was puzzled and scanned the stranger's face closely for a little space, while neither spoke. Then on a sudden he sprang to his feet, exclaiming :

"Father Norman ! Is it possible ?" and grasped the traveler's hands in unfeigned sincerity of welcome.

"Not '*Father*' Norman, if you please, Hope," responded the other, smiling unconstrainedly ; "I have no claim, you know, now, to that title," and he made room for himself at Hope's side.

The change in Norman's appearance might well puzzle an old acquaintance, for it was not merely the accident of dress and beard by which he was transformed ; the essential change was from within. The melancholy reserve, the guarded watchfulness, the dreamy mysticism which had haunted this face in other days, had given way to the inherent power and freedom of the man's nature which had at last asserted themselves. It was still a serious and a gentle face, and it bore deep lines of sorrow and mental conflict, but these served only to deepen the impression of courage and strength and purpose which none could miss who met the man.

"Of all men I know, Hope," Norman remarked, as he took the seat by his friend's side, "you are the one I want most to see. You have been in my mind continually of late and I have much to talk over with you."

"Your letter three months ago gave me profoundest satisfaction, my dear fellow," replied Hope earnestly.

"Well," returned Norman, "all that I vaguely suggested at that time is crystallizing fast in these last weeks. Do you remember what you used to say to me about almsgiving and charities?"

"Vaguely, I think."

"Well, my conception of all that kind of thing has been revolutionized. In my old system I looked at it subjectively almost altogether. It belonged to my theory of a devoted life to give even to the point of sacrifice, no matter how deep; but I cannot remember that I ever looked at the question from the other man's point of view. I was strangely ignorant of social conditions. There were 'the poor' and 'the rich,' and 'the rich' must help 'the poor' as a Christian grace and duty. That was about as far as I had thought it out."

"You had the disadvantage of being a rich man's son," said Hope.

Norman smiled and went on speaking:

"You know I have spent the last six months simply in studying Barnardo's work in and out of London, and I tell you, Hope, I am no longer a spectator in other men's matters. I am going to work if God will show me anything I am fit for."

"You will preach, Norman?"

"No," replied the other, with a painful shadow on his face, "I fear never again. I feel that I have proved myself so blind a guide in divine things that I cannot again seek a place of spiritual leadership. If others trusted me, I still could not trust myself; and, besides,

the few and simple verities to which I cling would give me place in no existing system, I fear; and certainly, Hope," and Norman smiled again, "I am not minded to start a new religious departure."

"You will see your way plainer by and by."

"Yes, I think so. But, meanwhile, I want you to know that you can count upon me in your work at the settlement, if you can use a discredited man such as I fear I still am in Coalport. I have come home as men did in war time—simply to bear arms. The social struggle which is upon the country seems to me to demand imperatively that every loyal man shall do his duty. We shall have to fight in clouds of dust and smoke, too thick, I suppose, to see through, for a long time to come, but not too thick to fight in."

Hope looked with intense interest into Norman's kindling face.

"One thing at least is clear to me," he continued; "that is, that no man has a right to lead the life of a solitary recluse, to devote himself to his own development even in spiritual things, after he is sufficiently equipped for duty, when other men are going down all around him in the struggle with bare material poverty and physical distress. I am a Socialist, at least as far as concerns a man's use of his

mental and moral forces, and it may be a good deal farther.

"That old house of my father's in Minster Street, Hope, I made it a kind of shell for my one poor soul to grow in, and it grew small, I am afraid, all the time—turned it into a kind of cloister, you know, fruitless and barren of results. I propose now to redeem it to some practical use. I think it has a good many possibilities. It is full of pictures, very good ones too; my father was a collector, and an excellent judge. The library is very fair too."

Hope's eyes brightened at the significance of this suggestion.

"What do you think? Can we turn it to account? It is big enough, you know, for almost anything."

Hope nodded emphatically.

"I could put it to a dozen uses to-morrow, if I had the chance," he replied.

"Good! You see, then, there is much to discuss, and I shall see you shortly; but here we are, slowing into the station already," and Norman, with a hurried hand-clasp, left his friend and made ready to leave the train.

A few minutes later Norman started off alone, as he wished to be, over the crisp, new-fallen snow at a rapid gait. He had sent his luggage to a hotel, but he had no mind for a

hotel himself just yet; he was eager for a glimpse of the old familiar streets, and his heart within him was deeply stirred.

But the streets were gay to-night with Christmas greens and Christmas cheer and Christmas shoppers, and an infectious gayety seemed to pervade the air.

"Hurrah for me!" muttered Norman, under his breath. "On the spot at last, after nearly two years, and not a whimper of longing for the 'dear old days' yet. I shall do finely at this rate. I believe I even dare to walk down Minster Street," and he turned in that direction and soon came in sight of the sculptured front of St. Cuthbert's. "The good bishop will have a clean mantle of snow to-night to cover the blackness of his robes," he thought; "but what is that canopy from the door to the street? Doubtless a wedding later," and Norman hastened on to the spot.

A broad carpet covered the church steps and pavement, but the doors were all locked. Turning, he stood irresolute for a moment on the steps, when suddenly the bells high above his head began chiming loud and lustily the glad old Christmas hymn:

With hearts truly grateful,
Come, all ye faithful,
To Jesus, to Jesus, in Bethlehem!

It was a melody which Norman could never hear without an inner excitement, and it thrilled him now as no other sound on earth could have done.

In a deep voice, low and muffled, he struck into the second stave, and sang with the chimes :

See Christ our Saviour,
Heaven's greatest favor ;
Let us hasten to adore him,
Let us hasten to adore him,
Our God and King !

The door behind him was opened from within, the old sexton, whom he remembered perfectly, appeared, anxiously sweeping a few snowflakes from the steps.

Norman turned slightly and spoke to the old man, who plainly did not recognize him and who vouchsafed the information that there was going to be a great wedding in the church at eight o'clock.

"I should like to go in a moment and see the church," Norman remarked. "I used to know it pretty well."

"No, sir, very sorry, sir, but no strangers will be admitted to-night—only them having cards. You haven't got a card, have you?"

"Oh, no ; I do not even know who is to be married."

"Why you must be a stranger in Coalport then, sure enough. There hasn't much else been talked about here lately. It's Mr. Horatio Barringer's daughter, the younger one, and she's to marry young Ripley. Heard of the parties, perhaps?"

Yes, Norman had heard of the parties, in fact had known them well, long ago.

The old sexton relented a little. Some touch of distinction in Norman's manner of speech, some latent association recalled unconsciously by his voice, affected him.

"Well, mebbe as you know the parties, or used to, and nobody being about, it won't do any harm if I let you step into the church just a minute."

Accordingly, an instant later Norman found himself standing with head uncovered and humbly bent, in the broad aisle of St. Cuthbert's, beside the sexton, who did not know him.

The chancel was full of tall white lilies and glossy-leaved palms, mingled with the Christmas greens which hung heavily everywhere.

"It'll be a great wedding, I can tell you that," whispered the old man beside him, breaking into Norman's brooding reverie. "The bishop himself has come to perform the ceremony, and the choir has been practising

them special pieces, 'The Voice that breathed o'er Eden,' and such like, for a month back."

"Have there been many changes for a year or two in the choir?" asked Norman, turning to leave the church.

"Oh, a pretty good number. But they've lost one of their best for to-morrow; the choir-master was nearly wild when he heard it."

"Who was that?"

"A little fellow the man who used to be here before this one—Father Norman, I mean—picked up, somehow or another. Joey Ahern his name is. He's got a rare voice, I can tell you, and him such a little chap too."

"What has happened to him?" asked Norman quickly. They had reached the vestibule now.

"Got hurt at the works yesterday, pretty well crushed, I guess," said the sexton; "they don't know as he'll pull through. Shouldn't wonder if he didn't live the night out."

XXXII

NORMAN had not waited for the last words, but was down the steps and down the street leaving the old man to wonder who he could have been. In the square he found a cab and was driven rapidly through the lower town to "the settlement," where, in the neighborhood of the mines and smelting works the families of the miners were mainly congregated. On they drove, with coal-black furnaces belching out their flames and smoke on every hand, past the squalid, miserable dwellings with the clang of the iron works filling the air with discordant sound.

Norman dismissed the cab at the head of one well-remembered alley, and plunged down into the darkness alone. Lights in these regions were at long intervals, and it was with difficulty he could keep his footing on the slippery walk, or discern one house from another. Deep down the lane, before a tall, narrow tenement, was the outline, against the blackened snow, of a carriage standing. When he reached it Norman was sure of the house and went in, and up two flights of stairs.

The door into the front room where he had often visited Joey stood open ; it was dark inside and there seemed a hush upon the place which he hesitated to break by knocking.

He listened a moment. A woman's voice was praying. He waited no longer, but pushing the door open without noise, he stepped softly into the dark and empty room. The door was open into a room beyond, which was lighted. As his eyes became accustomed to the light he could see clearly several figures about a bed. A tall old man stood erect in the full light of the oil lamp, his head bent, his profile outlined against the wall beyond, a strangely majestic figure in that low place. Norman knew it well. The figure of a black-robed sister could also be seen beyond the bed and two other women were kneeling by its side. One was Joey's mother ; one was praying. It was Mary Herendean. Her voice rose sweet and clear and steady above the sobbing of the poor mother, with the slight rhythmical swing of her Quaker inheritance and the powerful "gift in prayer" occasionally possessed by women of her sect.

"Our Lord Christ," she prayed, "thou who didst become a child, thou who didst know pain and sorrow and even death, for us in our sore need, come to us now to-night in this place. Our Saviour, we could not know

the Father's love except he had sent thee to die for us, but we know it and we beg thee, because thou dost love us, to help us now. Comfort this mother and bless our dear boy and pity his pain. Thou didst touch our human frames when thou wast here on earth and healed them of all their suffering; O Saviour, lay thy loving hand on this poor child even now. We love thee, we trust thee. Come thou to us, Lord. Amen."

Every one in the room joined in the "amen," and the man who stood with bowed head in the doorway added a deep voice to the rest. Then, as the others turning saw and did not speak for wonder and amazement, he stepped through the door and stood by the bedside. Joey lay with eyes partially closed, his face drawn with pain, but hardly conscious. Francis Norman bent and took into his own the limp, battered little hand which lay upon the coverlet. For an instant his head was bowed and his broad chest heaved with strong emotion. Then he lifted his head, and looking up, still holding Joey's hand in his, he spoke the words distinctly, as if to rouse the child by the power of association:

"*I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his Son, our Lord.*"

There was no mistaking who he was when they thus heard his voice.

"Yes, sir, Father Norman," cried Joey's mother through her tears; "it was yersilf taught me poor boy the creed, and he niver forgot it. He could say it now, poor lad, if he had but got his sinses wid the pain."

"Let us go on together," said Francis Norman. There was a quiet command in his manner which awed them all and restrained even their surprise at his appearing thus among them. The voluble, tearful Irish Romanist, crossing herself devoutly, the grave and silent Friend and his fair daughter, the black-robed churchwoman, and the strong man who had come but now from the regions of blank unbelief, standing thus around the poor little bed, repeated reverently and unitedly the solemn utterances of the Apostles' Creed. And as it went on Joey's face relaxed its tension, he opened his eyes and fixed them on Norman, and with the words "*the forgiveness of sins,*" a weak little voice was added to the rest, going on through "*the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting*" to the *amen.*

Then two arms were stretched out, and, Norman kneeling by the bed, Joey's hands were clasped around his neck and he murmured faintly:

"Yer come back jest in time."

"Yes, Joey," Norman whispered, while hot

tears blinded his eyes, "I am through wandering now. I have come back to take care of you and help you to get well. You know I am going to stay with you all night. In the morning you will be much better," and holding up his hand, he motioned that they all should leave the room. The little arms sank back upon the bed. With a child's movement of the head when it is ready for sleep Joey turned on the pillow and closed his eyes.

Norman joined Mary Herendean for a moment in the dark outer room and took her hand.

"*The Christ is born*," he said low, but with profound meaning. "To-night for the first time I could pronounce the creed. It is you who have led me to his feet—in your prayer."

That was all. Even with the words Norman had returned to his post at Joey's bedside and Mary went on down the dark, narrow stairs with her father, her heart singing with men and angels the Christmas hymn which the church bells still rang joyously out into the night:

Let us hasten to adore him,
Let us hasten to adore him,
Our God and King!

XXXIII

ALL night as Francis Norman watched beside Joey's bed, while the poor mother, worn out, slept, and the child slept too, a presence well-nigh angelic to his thought seemed to linger in the room beside him, and he still saw Mary Herendean praying by that bedside, with her pure face and voice—a saint, without distinction of name or garb, marked but by the consecration of her noble womanhood, bearing the cross on her heart, not on her garment, pledged to the service of all who suffered or were in need.

It was a night of wonder and glory to Francis Norman. The Christ whom he had sought had suddenly come to him in fullness and in truth. But with the revelation of Love incarnate and divine had come another revelation of high and thrilling power. With awe and delight his heart yielded to the mastery of another love, potent, exalted, hardly less than divine, a love of which he could say, "*Ich liebe dich in Gott und Gott in dir.*"

He wondered, looking back over the past, how to name his love for Eunice ; it had been

a passion of tenderness and ardent idealizing of a nature weak and shallow. Such a love could not in its very nature exalt or ennoble a man, could not find its place in his religious life. There seemed a singular significance almost inevitable in the issue, that his ideal of sainthood broke down when he yielded himself to the love of a girl like Eunice. He had not dreamed it was so at the time, but he could understand now. He had dwelt altogether then, it seemed, in a world of semblances and symbols; now he had awakened to the divine realities, profoundly greater, as they were profoundly simpler, than his dreams.

With the morning Joey opened his eyes; his face was clear and his look relieved.

"Guess yer *have* made me better, Father Norman," he said in his broken little voice; "you and Miss Mary. I tell yer she's the saint on earth!"

"I believe she is, Joey."

"She's took awful good care of me mother and me iver sinst yer went away. If I was you I'd be fer gittin' married to *her*," and Joey turned up his eyes in solemn emphasis of his sincerity.

"I'll do my best, Joey," replied Norman with his grave smile, "but you must give me time, you know."

"That's so too," murmured Joey. "What are yer goin' ter be now, Father Norman? I s'pose yer can't be boss at St. Cuthbert's enny more, 'cause ther's another man got yer place."

Norman smiled.

"No, I don't exactly want to be a 'boss' anywhere, Joey, but a servant. I shall try to help Mr. Hope at the settlement, and perhaps make a place for little fellows like you who get hurt at the mines to stay in and get well, if it please God to let me. Is that all right? I want to do Christ's work, you know."

"Yes, only yer ain't goin' away from Coalport ag'in—*sure?*" and Joey's anxiety was pitiful to see.

"No, Joey, I shall stay in Coalport to do my work. But your mother is coming now, and I will go and leave you for a while. You see, I really haven't exactly landed yet," and with a look of strong encouragement and a hand gentle as a woman's laid on the boy's forehead, Francis Norman left the place.

It was only an hour later that he stood upon the porch of Moses Herendean's home. Simeon, the elderly Friend, was cleaning the snow from the path, and the house door stood open. Norman waited a moment for the appearance of the maid, whose occupation was indicated by a broom and duster. She came

presently, a mat in her hands to shake, and stared at Norman in unfeigned surprise. Simeon was still halting between two opinions as to his identity. It was still not eight o'clock.

"Has Miss Herendean come downstairs yet?" Norman asked composedly, stepping inside, not caring to wait for Simeon to reach a conclusion.

The maid answered no, but it was about time for her now, if he would come in. Bidding her make no announcement of his presence, Norman went into the hall, laid aside his coat and hat in the familiar place and walked up and down the hall below the old portraits of William Penn and George Fox, until at last, the maid withdrawn and the place quite still, he heard a step on the landing above and the sweep of a woman's dress.

Norman stood at the foot of the stairs as Mary came down. Her surprise showed in the brilliant color which rose to her cheeks, but not in words. She had been awake all night for joy and for love of him, but her eyes were as clear as a child's.

"I was a bold man to steal into your house like this," he said as he took her hand. "Merry Christmas! Has any one said it to you before? I want to be the first to give you the greeting to-day," and his eyes rested full

upon hers with such a splendor of love, the power and the passion of it, and its great bestowing, that her own eyes fell before them.

They passed together into the library.

"Yes, you are the first," she murmured, and asked a question about Joey, putting off, as women will, the crisis they most yearn for and most dread.

"Joey is better, and bound to get well," Norman answered with a ring of hope and confidence in his voice which warmed her heart; "Joey has issued his orders to me for the day, and I am here in obedience to them. I shall tell you later what they are."

"You will stay to see my father and take breakfast with us?" Mary asked, turning a little from his look which made her heart beat hard.

"That depends. You remind me that I must make haste. You know what I have come for, Mary, the one, only thing which could bring me here, where I had thought never to come again. You know that I love you, not because you are a saint and an angel, which may very well be, but because you are a woman, the sweetest and bravest and truest woman in the world, and the one only who will ever be my wife."

For a little space, the color all gone from her

face, Mary stood, her eyes drooping, her hands clasped behind her.

"How can it be," she faltered, "if you truly loved—*her?*"

"Mary," Francis Norman said, with something imperious in his tone, "you know what I loved in her—something that did not exist. Am I to be held true to a semblance, a dream?"

"No, my love, you are not!" she cried, with sudden, great surrender; "you are to be held true to me and to me only as long as we live," and she gave herself to his arms and to his kiss.

Afterward it befell that Mary would wear no engagement ring; and holding her firm, shapely hand later on that same Christmas Day, Norman asked concerning a tiny scar, crimson and cruciform, which he found on its surface.

"That is my sign of betrothal," she answered, the smile in her eyes mingled with tears, "that is the signet of our love set as long as I live on my hand."

But whence the scar and how it won that significance, she did not tell him then nor ever would.

XXXIV

IT was late in March. Francis Norman had run down just before noon one day to the Herendeans' to seek Mary's advice about certain details of his plans for "Norman House." For the Minster Street mansion, to be thus styled in his father's memory, was being refitted and fashioned for a home for the crippled and invalid children of miners. The upper stories would suffice at present for this purpose. The great rooms below were to retain their stately elegance and artistic appointments, and were to serve the purpose of a library, reading room, and picture gallery for the *clientèle* of James Hope's settlement, and for all who could be reached through them.

A new trade-school at the settlement was also full of absorbing interest to Norman, who had found work developing rapidly under his hands since his return. It was new work to him, but all the native manhood and force of his character rose to its demands; a hand to hand work among men and women and little children crushed by hard conditions; a throwing of himself, heart and soul and energy, not

as a priest, but as a Christian man, into the struggles of the very poor and very hopeless. There was, moreover, in him an effective and availing power of sympathy and comprehension which enabled him to fulfill the Christ-ideal as he never had done when as rector of St. Cuthbert's he had sought to carry out a dream of medieval sainthood.

"He knows our sorrows," men and women said; "he must have seen trouble himself."

Into every new purpose of love and beneficence, Mary Herendean entered with Norman, not only with full heart, but with wise and discerning judgment.

Hurrying into the hall now, without the ceremony of ringing the bell, he was about to enter the library with a familiar word of greeting, when he was checked by the sight of Mary, who was standing by the library table alone, with a pale, stricken face which told of some sudden shock of sorrow.

"Dearest," he cried, coming to her side, "what is it? your father?"

"No," she said, and held out to him a telegram. It was dated in a mountain town of North Carolina, a health resort, where Norman knew Ralph Kidder had gone with the intention of practising medicine; the words were these:

Your sister is alone and very ill. Come at once or you will be too late. EDWARD SLATER, M. D.

Hastily they discussed together the plan for Mary's immediate journey. She had already decided to leave by an evening train that night, the details were yet undecided. Her father knew and had gone to his own room to be alone with his grief.

"It will be a weary journey," said Norman as he studied a time-table which Mary had placed in his hand; "there are many changes and poor connections. You cannot get to Rockfall until the day after to-morrow, Mary."

"Oh, is it so long? How can I go through the long uncertainty? How can I keep my darling girl waiting alone so long?" and Mary's tears flowed fast as she thought of Eunice's extremity.

"You cannot endure it alone, Mary," Francis Norman said earnestly; "you must let me go with you. You will need me for the journey, and afterward. I shall go, dear."

"Oh, that would be the only comfort possible now," exclaimed Mary looking at him through her tears; "but can you? Is it quite right for us? You know my meaning."

"It will be quite right for you to travel with your husband," was the steady answer, and

Norman's eyes looked into Mary's with fathomless love. "I think it would be better, easier, for us to be married first. You must agree with me."

There had been no thought or word hitherto that their marriage would take place until the autumn. Mary Herendean looked with startled wonder into her lover's face, but after a moment's reflection, with a sorrowful smile she placed her hand in his and said very quietly:

"Yes, dear, I see it is the right way, the best."

"And you will be ready——?"

"At four o'clock."

"That will do very well. The train leaves at six."

And so it came about that at four o'clock that day, in the presence of Moses Herendean and the servants of the house and his own wife, whom he had brought at Norman's request, James Hope united in marriage these two, whose sorrow was thus made to consecrate their joy.

When on the third day they reached Rockfall in a great storm of wind and rain, Mary Norman found that Eunice's peril was even more imminent than she had feared.

The nurse and the doctor made the way

ready for her, led her to the room, and when she had entered closed the door. White and spent Eunice lay on the pillows, the great change plainly shadowed in her face. Her joy in seeing Mary was heartrending. Of Francis Norman's presence she never knew.

When they could talk a little Eunice said in her faint, fluttering whisper, for her breath failed fast:

"That picture, Mary, on the chimney, won't thee burn it in the fire—quick? I did not dare to ask the nurse, and I cannot see it there any longer."

Mary rose and crossed the room quickly. On the bare pine mantelpiece—for the house was an ill-finished, crudely built, temporary structure—stood in a gilt frame a small picture of an actress, a woman in man's stage attire, with a voluptuous figure and a smile of challenge on the bold, handsome face. Without a word Mary threw it into the fire and it was burned.

"A company of people like that has been here until two weeks ago," Eunice whispered. "Ralph liked it and he was always with them. That woman he used to talk about continually. He said *she* had temperament, *verve*, all that I lacked Then that night, the last, thee knows, before they left, there was a great supper down-

stairs and Ralph made me go. Mary, I could not stay there. I did not know about such things before. I was selfish and dreadful, but I was an innocent girl, Mary, wasn't I?"

"Yes, darling; yes, Una, yes."

"So I came out and up here. Ralph followed me with this picture in his hand. She had given it to him and he put it there and said 'there it should stay!' How angry he was!"

"Forget it, dearest. Where is he now?"

"I do not know and I do not want thee to try to send him any word. He broke my heart, Mary, that night. And when he had said all he went away—when the others did. His anger was not hot and fiery, but cold as death, Mary—cold as death. It chilled me here," and Eunice put her thin hand over her heart, "and all the days since I could never, never get warm again. Is it always so, I wonder? Is that death?"

The great dark eyes, more beautiful than ever, looked up with piteous appeal once more into Mary's face, and Mary, for all her strong control, fell on her knees in an agony of sobbing and tears and prayer beside the bed.

They talked no more that night. The doctor forbade it. Mary sat in perfect stillness by the bed through the long hours, the nurse and Francis Norman within call.

It was dawn when Eunice opened her eyes after an hour of restless slumber and said so low that Mary could scarcely catch the words:

"I dreamed that I was in Friends' meeting again—it was, oh so still—and I thought maybe it was heaven."

Then after a pause: "I have done so many wrong things, I know now. Once thee said I was pure in heart, sister."

"Yes, Una."

"Can our Saviour, whom I trust, make that true now, since I am so very sorry?"

"Yes, precious child; oh, my darling, yes."

"Mary," the solemn eyes were dark with death, "shall I see God?"

"Yes, my blessed child shall see God. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

"And father?"

"Loves—forgives—blesses."

Eunice smiled, put her hand in Mary's, and so quietly breathed away her life.

Early in the morning Francis Norman came into the room with a handful of white wind-flowers which he had searched for and gathered in all the storm on the mountain side, the thought in his heart, "Thou shalt not lack the flower that's like thy face." He stood and looked long at Eunice—the white brow under

the soft cloud of dark hair; the sweet, cold face. He laid the flowers upon her breast, between the small hands, and so, with starting tears and an anguish of tenderness, came away.

. . . . . .

That night, while the storm which swept the Atlantic States beat against the window panes and moaned mournfully about his house, Moses Herendean sat alone by his fireside in the silent room. Mary's message had reached him and there was little more to wait for now.

But as the storm outside laid low alike the tender spring flowers and the strong, stately trees at its will, so the bitter blast which had scattered the flower of Eunice's frail life bowed the old man's head and shook his very being; and once more, as from the first, the ancient, primal throe of fatherhood went up in the cry: "Would God I had died for thee!"

The End

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